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CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WOMEN IN NORWAY, SPAIN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION, GENDER AND CITIZENSHIP

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CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WOMEN IN NORWAY, SPAIN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION, GENDER AND CITIZENSHIP

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Introduction

This study focuses on Christian and Muslim women's religious faith, identities and practice. A basic assumption is that the religious arena, in the form of churches, mosques, and other religious organisations, provides spaces where women and men act as citizens. The main objective of the research has been to identify and assess how women's individual religious identities and practices may provide both resources and/or barriers to citizenship. Citizenship is here viewed in a broad sense: it refers not only to the status, rights and duties of individuals, but also to their participation, identity and belonging. Women often draw on their own sense of identity and belonging as a source of empowerment and participation. Religious identity and belonging can thus be a resource for citizenship practice. In our project, we have examined how Christian and Muslim women link their religious faith, identity and practice with active citizenship.

The study

In order to investigate how religious women in Norway, Spain and the UK talk about and practice citizenship in their everyday life, we have interviewed women who belong to either the majority religion, Christianity, or to the largest minority religion, Islam. In total, we conducted 60 in-depth interviews with women living in Oslo, Norway; in Madrid, Spain; and in the East Midlands region of the UK. In each country, 10 Christian women and 10 Muslim women were interviewed. In Norway, half of the Christian women belonged to the Lutheran State Church and half to a Pentecostal congregation. In Spain, half of the Christian women were Catholic, and half were Pentecostal. In the UK, half of the Christian women identified as Anglican, and half as Pentecostal. The Muslim women interviewed in each country were equally divided between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Due to the small number of research participants, this study is not representative of Christian and Muslim women in any of the three countries. Because the main aim of our study has been to explore issues of identity, belonging and participation more in-depth, we chose to include a relatively small number of women.

Key findings

Religion, identity and meaning

Religious identity and belonging to a religious community is of crucial importance to the lives of the interviewed women. They attach a deep meaning of personal faith to their own relationship with God and to religious teachings, to their relationships with other people, and to their own belonging within the larger community, including the

religious community and the nation in which they live. Identity and religious experiences are viewed as complex and situational, and are often used as a resource for participation and integration and, more generally, for being content in life.

- There were similarities across the faith groups concerning what religion *does* (the various functions of faith). Religion or faith are claimed to be the very 'foothold' or 'foundation' of the lives of the respondents. Faith provides direction at difficult crossroads, and faith guides all aspects of life. Faith is a provider of community, company, and belonging. Religious groups represent significant communities for inclusion and participation.

- We found differences between Muslim and Christian participants regarding what religion is perceived to be, or what religion *is.* Muslim women often referred to what they perceived as the obligatory aspects of Islam, including prescriptions they are expected or obliged to adhere to (such as prayer and alms-giving), whereas Christian women were less concerned with behavioural aspects of their faith and were more concerned with 'inner faith' and their personal relationship with God.

- Nearly all the research participants expressed a great commitment to participation within organised religious contexts, and all of them imparted a strong notion of belonging to a religious community of believers. At times, the notion of belonging was related to a specific church or mosque, while at other times it was related to the larger faith tradition (Christianity or Islam) to which they belong, or to their national/ethnic origin. Many of the interviewees also gave the impression of a moderate to high level of participation in the civil society outside the religious community. A further sense of belonging was expressed in relation to a joint community of believers across faith traditions; a sense of shared religious faith was invoked between Christians and Muslims, thus indirectly offering support to interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

- A further sense of belonging, or even of not belonging, was noted on the basis of ethnicity, where some ethnic minority women felt excluded or marginalised by the majority society. For some women in our study, their ethnic minority status at times made them feel marginalised in comparison with white, ethnic majority women. Muslim women were generally concerned with and critical of the stereotypical image of 'the oppressed Muslim woman'. Ethnic minority women expressed a deep-felt sense of belonging to their own ethnic and religious community. Organised religion provides ethnic minority women with a supportive community of faith and opportunities for empowerment and participation.

An aspect of similarity across religious faith is the reference to being *different* because of their religiosity. Although this experience of being 'different' was often described in positive terms by both Christian and Muslim women, such as being a person of moral integrity and trustworthiness, the negative aspects were an issue for some women belonging to the minority within Christianity (Pentecostals) and to almost all the Muslim women. Some of the women belonging to majority or state churches at times felt like a minority in society at large which they described as secular.

Religion and citizenship

- Participants' faith, be it Christianity or Isl*am, struct*ures and guides their way of life both within the home and within the larger community. A uniting characteristic among the interviewed women is their emphasis on religion as 'a way of life'. Religious belief and rituals are not viewed as a separate sphere of thought and action, but as deeply intertwined with all areas of life, and as providing guiding principles and inspiration for how to live a good life.

- Both Christian and Muslim women emphasised that all human beings are equal before God. They talked about citizenship within this-worldly contexts (the home/family, the church/mosque, the wider religious community, the nation-state, and the international community) and within the other-worldly context of heaven as a community of believers.

- The interviewed women displayed a moderate to high degree of participation in civil society through voluntary work for congregations, churches and mosques, or for 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.

- Religious belief and practice is viewed by the women as intimately linked with responsible behaviour and with a deep concern for the well-being of others. Although the concept of 'religious citizenship' was new to the research participants, many of them found that it made sense to talk about religion in relation to citizenship as *participation and belonging*, which their faith-based community participation was an example of. To be a good citizen and 'a good Christian' or 'a good Muslim' was basically the same for all our interviewees, and included values and practices such as showing love and care, respect and tolerance, and engaging with the community.

- When we as researchers talked about religion in relation to 'citizenship', some women expressed concern that if citizenship was viewed as *status and rights*, then it would not be helpful to talk about 'religious citizenship' as this could mean that different religions were treated differently by the state or by society. A tension was noted between the ideal that all religions should be treated on equal terms, while in practice some religions could or were being discriminated against. As such, the concept of 'religious citizenship' might create more divisions between religions, rather than ensuring equality between different religions. Any academic conceptualisation of religious citizenship should therefore emphasise the equal status and opportunities of all religions and of all believers within various faith traditions, together with issues of participation and belonging.

- Yet another dimension of 'religious citizenship' concerned the treatment and participation of women within various faith traditions. The interviewed women emphasised how their religion allows them rights as women and opportunities to participate in organised religious contexts. In our study we found that Muslim women's participation and leadership in the religious arena is generally focused within women-only spaces. An important issue for Muslim women is therefore the allocation of a designated space for women in mosques which allows them to attend collective worship and participate in communal religious activities.

However, in the Norwegian case, we saw that prescriptions concerning sex segregation are not absolute; for example, one mosque has opened up for a practical solution involving gender-mixing in order to meet different needs among women. Christian women in our study were found to be involved in both gender-mixed and gender-segregated activities, including worship and teaching.

Gender equality and the women's movement

- The research participants were asked how they understand the term 'gender equality'. The main finding was that they referred to biological differences between women and men, and that such differences supported the ideal of complementary gender roles and the equal *value* of women and men. Although women and men were said to be different, it was emphasised that women and men should have the same opportunities in society, and that women's rights and empowerment should be supported. The equal value of women and men was seen as supported by religious prescriptions.

- The women's movement was mainly viewed as having had a positive impact in relation to women's rights (including voting rights), equal opportunities, equal pay, and women's empowerment. However, several of the interviewees think that the women's movement and feminists have 'gone too far' and are 'too extreme'. Christian women in our study viewed the women's movement as having contributed to positive changes within churches related to the increasingly prominent and recognised roles played by women in leadership. Both Christian and Muslim women viewed the women's movement as having impacted on social practices and values in the family and society at large. Most participants viewed the movement as having contributed positively to women's roles in politics and in the labour market. There were more mixed views on the impact on the family, as women's strive for independence could be seen as linked to increased family break-up and divorce rates. The movement's emphasis on men taking on household work and caring roles was highlighted as positive.

Conclusion

- 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 religion may have empowering effects for women. 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, but rather a malleable resource that can be adapted to various social circumstances.

- Religion is a resource in the sense that it creates and provides meaning and a sense of belonging; it also stimulates participation both within and outside the religious community.

- The notion of gender equality is largely understood by our participants as 'equal value'. This understanding is explained through reference to biological differences between women and men, and ideals of complementary gender roles.

- We have detected an ambivalent view of the women's movement and of feminism. While the women's movement is viewed to have had a positive impact

on women's rights and opportunities, several of the interviewees thin that the women's movement has 'gone too far' and is 'too extreme'.

- 'Religious citizenship' was a new term for our research participants, but they thought it made sense to include religion in a citizenship terminology. In particular, the term 'religious citizenship' addresses the interviewees' sense of belonging to a religious community.

- Being positioned as belonging to a religious 'majority' or a religious 'minority' makes a difference. The minority position is related to being part of a minority religion (Islam), to being part of an ethnic minority, and to being perceived through society's often stereotypical views of Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular. We note that being positioned as belonging to a religious majority (Christianity) may include privileges, in as much as Christianity is still tied to the state and may be seen as part of a 'cultural hegemony', as well as, in some contexts, receiving more financial support from the public purse than other religions do. However, there is also a sense among some of our Christian interviewees that they belong to a religious minority in relation to what is perceived as a secular majority.

Project details

This research is part of a larger study entitled FEMCIT: Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe: The Impact of Contemporary Women's Movements (www.femcit.org), funded by the European Commission's 6th framework programme (2007-2011). The FEMCIT research theme *'Multicultural citizenship: Intersections between feminism, ethnic identity and religion'* is led by Dr Line Nyhagen Predelli (Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University) and supported by an international, collaborative team of researchers investigating issues of gender, ethnicity and religion in Norway, Spain and the UK. The research team includes Dr Line Nyhagen Predelli, Research Associate, Research Associate Dr Esmeranda Manful, Professor Beatrice Halsaa, PhD Candidate and Research Fellow Cecilie Thun, and Dr Esther Quintero.

1 ISSUES OF GENDER, RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP IN NORWAY, SPAIN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

1.1 Our research project

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 religious organisations, 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 organisations 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.

The aim of our Strand 2 research is to identify and assess how women's individual religious identities and practices within mainly organisational 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. We also ask what religious women themselves think about the concept 'religious citizenship', which until now has not been much used or discussed in scholarly literature (see Chapter 2).

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 organisations 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 organisational religious structures (women's groups in 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 project is part of the larger FEMCIT integrated project, and constitutes a contribution to the study of various citizenship dimensions within FEMCIT. The main emphasis in Work Package 4 is on women's ethnic and religious citizenship, while the dimensions addressed by other FEMCIT Work Packages include political, social, economic, sexual and bodily, and intimate citizenship. Strand 2 of Work Package 4 is especially concerned with *religious* dimensions of citizenship practices among women within the nation-state contexts of Norway, Spain and the UK. Our study of religious women in Norway, Spain and the UK seeks to make an original and important contribution to academic scholarship regarding how majority and minority religions may function as resources for and/or as barriers to citizenship, and also in terms of our discussions of the usefulness of the concept of 'religious citizenship'. Moreover, our study makes a valuable contribution to the study of how religious women perceive women's movements and feminism.

1.2 A work in progress

Our Strand 2 research consists of qualitative case studies in 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). The three countries have different emigration and immigration histories, and current and past policies on immigration, citizenship, faith and religious belief, are influenced by these varying historical and geographical contexts. Both Spain and the UK are EU member states, although with different affiliations to the treaty, and may thus

directly influence, and in turn be influenced by, European legislation and policies.[1] Norway has chosen to affiliate with the EU as a member of the Extended Economic Area, and while it is influenced by EU legislation, the country has less influence on the formulation of EU policies.

The first outcome of Strand 2 was the three separate country-based Working Papers. Part of a work in progress, this Working Paper is the second major outcome of Strand 2 of a larger study of ethnic and religious citizenship in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. It takes a first step in a research process aiming towards a comprehensive comparison between the three case studies. While we have managed to move most parts of our analysis forward in a comparative direction, we are also acutely aware that more work needs to be done to develop the cross-country analysis. For example, more systematic and consistent descriptions of the citizenship, gender and religious regimes in each country, with further comparable indicators of religious beliefs and attendance, are warranted. Our analysis will also benefit from the inclusion of further comparable statistics on attitudes towards women's rights and gender equality indicators from each of the case study contexts. While developing careful and comprehensive comparative analyses of our rich and detailed interview material is a time-consuming task, our aim is to build on this Working Paper and further refine our comparative analysis through work specifically intended for academic publication.

In the following sections of this introductory chapter, we present some contextual information about issues concerning gender, religion and citizenship in Norway, Spain and the UK. Although the comparative dimensions of this information will have to be developed further, it is our intention that the information can be read as a context for and background to the empirical analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. In chapter 1 we have sought to include new information not already been presented in the individual country reports delivered to the European Commission in April 2010, but inevitably some of the descriptive information from the previous reports has been included as well. The individual country reports also contain further detailed descriptions of issues pertaining to the context in each country.

[1] The UK became an EU-member state in 1973, while Spain joined the EU in 1986.

1.3 Gender development and attitudes towards gender roles

> *'Gender equality has become a central element in the definition of human development, for it is an essential aspect of human equality, like civil and political liberties and human rights.'*
>
> (Inglehart, 2008: 143).

In this section, we present selected statistics regarding gender development, recent figures on women's and men's participation in the labour market, and findings regarding women's and men's attitudes towards gender roles, thus offering a glimpse into some of the key characteristics of and differences between the three countries in our study. All three states have ratified the UN Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with Norway ratifying the convention in 1981, Spain in 1984, and the UK in 1986.

The United Nations Human Development Data from 2009 offer comparable data on key indicators related to gender development. Norway is a top scorer on both the HDI (Human Development Rank; first place) and the GEM (Gender Empowerment; second place) measures. Neither Spain nor the UK score in the top 10 on these two measures, with Spain obtaining the 15th and 11th places on the two measures, respectively, and the UK obtaining the 21st and 15th places, respectively.[2] In all three countries women received the right to vote before World War II, with women in Norway having received it as early as 1913. However, women have not yet gained full parity in any of the three parliaments. In Norway, women hold 36 per cent of the parliamentary seats, while in Spain they hold 34 per cent and in the UK only 20 per cent.[3] At the ministerial level, however, Norway is highly advanced with women holding 56 per cent of ministerial posts, while in Spain and the UK women hold 44 and 23 per cent, respectively, of ministerial posts. All three countries have some way to go in terms of achieving 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 52 and 67 per cent, respectively, of men's income.

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2 http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/ [accessed 13 August 2010].

3 The figure for the UK rose to 22 per cent after the parliamentary elections in May 2010. The latest HDI rankings are from 2009.

Table 1.1 Gender development data

	Norway[4]	Spain[5]	United Kingdom[6]
Population in 2007	4.7 million	44.1 million	60.9 million
HDI Human Development Rank	1	15	21
Women obtained right to vote	1913	1931	1918, 1928
Women seats in parliament	36%	34%	20%
Women in government at ministerial level	56%	44%	23%
GEM Gender Empowerment Measure	2	11	15
Ratio estimated female to male earned income	0.77	0.52	0.67

An important measure of financial independence and/or security is labour market participation. The employment rate in Norway, Spain and the UK differs by gender, with the largest gap in women's and men's employment rate in Spain, and the narrowest gap in Norway. Thus Norwegian women and men have the most equal employment rate, with a difference in men's favour of five per cent. Spanish women and men have the most unequal employment rate, with a difference in men's favour at close to 19 per cent. The rate for UK women and men is placed inbetween those for Norway and Spain, with a difference in employment rate of 11.5 per cent in men's favour.

[4] http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_NOR.html [accessed 13 August 2010].
[5] http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_ESP.html [accessed 13 August 2010].
[6] http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_GBR.html [accessed 13 August 2010].

Table 1.2 Male and female employment rates 2008: Norway, Spain and the UK

Employment rate 2008		
	Male	**Female**
Spain	73.5	54.9
Norway	80.5	75.4
UK	77.3	65.8

(Source: Eurostat yearbook 2010.)[7]

Furthermore, women's and men's share of full-time and part-time work differ greatly, with significant numbers of women, particularly in Norway and in the UK, working part-time. The relatively low employment rate for women in Spain can probably, in part, be explained by a lack of available part-time jobs. Flexible working hours and part-time work are factors that generally increase women's employment rate. However, while part-time work makes it easier to combine paid work and unpaid childcare and housework, it also has a significant effect on women's pensions and the degree to which they are financially independent. The relevant figures for part-time employment can be found below, in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Males and females employed part-time 2009 (percentage of total employment)

Part-time share of total employment by gender, 2009		
	Males	**Females**
Spain	4.9	23.0
Norway	15.2	43.4
UK	11.8	42.5

(Source: Eurostat.)[8]

[7] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CD-10-220/EN/KS-CD-10-2201-EN.PDF [accessed 17 September 2010].

It is also interesting to look at similarities and differences between Norway, Spain and the UK in terms of attitudes towards gender roles. In an article which compares both gender role attitudes and work values in a number of European countries, Fortin (2005) has calculated (based on three waves of the World Value Surveys)[9] the proportion of male and female adult respondents (aged 18-64) in each country that agrees with various statements aiming to measure such attitudes and values. The four measures Fortin has used to calculate attitudes towards gender roles include two statements that can be said to indicate a traditional view of gender roles, and two statements that can be said to indicate support for a more progressive view of gender roles. The four statements are as follows:

1) 'When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women' (traditional attitude).
2) 'Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay' (traditional attitude).
3) 'A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work' (progressive attitude).
4) 'Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income' (progressive attitude).

Fortin's (2005: 436) results regarding Norway, Spain and the UK are reproduced in the following table:

[8] For figures related to females in part-time employment, see http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00159&language=en [accessed 17 September 2010].
For figures related to males in part-time employment, see http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00159&language=en [accessed 17 September 2010].

[9] The three waves are 1990-93, 1995-97, and 1999-2001. Fortin has calculated averages over time for each attitudinal item (Fortin, 2005).

Table 1.4 Gender role attitudes among women and men in Norway, Spain and the UK. Proportions of respondents combined from three World Value Surveys

	Norway	Spain	UK
Item 1 (traditional)	Women 0.10 Men 0.13	Women 0.22 Men 0.22	Women 0.19 Men 0.24
Item 2 (traditional)	Women 0.54 Men 0.56	Women 0.55 Men 0.59	Women 0.59 Men 0.54
Item 3 (progressive)	Women 0.80 Men 0.64	Women 0.74 Men 0.73	Women 0.78 Men 0.71
Item 4 (progressive)	Women 0.79 Men 0.79	Women 0.92 Men 0.88	Women 0.66 Men 0.67

(Source: Fortin, 2005: 436.)

A quick examination of the table figures make it apparent that on the items measuring traditional attitudes, men are on the whole somewhat more traditional than women. Moreover, on the items measuring progressive attitudes, women are somewhat more progressive than men. However, the gender differences are not huge. The general picture also demonstrates that there is much less support for statements indicating traditional views of gender roles, than there is for statements indicating progressive views of gender roles.

In terms of differences by country, Spaniards and Britons appear to agree somewhat more than Norwegians with the statement that 'when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women'. However, the proportion of 18-64-year-olds who agree with this item is quite low across all countries. Therefore, it could be said that, in general, men are no longer viewed as the main breadwinners, and there seems to be widespread support for the equal right of women and men to work.

The figures for Item 2 are also quite similar across all three countries. Interestingly, the proportion of 18-64-year-olds who agree with this item, which also measures

traditional attitudes, is much higher than for Item 1. More than half of all respondents in all three countries agree on average, over time, with the statement that 'Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay'. While this can be interpreted as support for traditional attitudes towards gender roles, it can also be viewed as support for the notion that unpaid work in the home (housework and caring for children) is as valuable to society and to the family as is paid work.

The two progressive items demonstrate more variety across the two genders and across the three countries. On the item 'A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work', more than three-quarters of all female respondents agree with the statement. Support for the statement is also strong among male respondents, with at least six in 10 men agreeing. However, Norwegian men seem to lag somewhat behind both Spanish and British men in terms of support for this particular statement. On the whole, a majority of respondents in each country agree that stay-at-home mums and working mums can have equally warm relationships with their children.

Support for the fourth item varies considerably between the three countries. Women and men in Spain show overwhelming support (about nine out of ten respondents of both genders) for the statement 'Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income'. Women and men in Norway also show strong support for the statement, with eight out of 10 agreeing. In the UK, however, there is notably less support among both women and men, although more than half of male and female respondents do support the statement. It would thus seem that the notion that both genders are equally responsible for securing the family income is somewhat less supported among women and men in the UK, than among women and men in Norway and in Spain. This could indicate the presence of more traditional gender role attitudes in the UK than in Norway and in Spain.

1.4 Women's movements and gender equality policy in Norway, Spain and the UK

In relation to policies promoting gender equality, **Norway** has a strong national and international reputation of advocating women-friendly policies as both a legal

requirement and a substantive aim. Norway has been among the states with the highest percentage of women in political institutions,[10] and recent legislation requires all public and privately owned companies to have at least 40 per cent of their board members from each gender. Gender equality legislation is generally strong, but provides an important, and contested, exemption to religious communities.

The Norwegian gender equality policy machinery has been reorganised several times during recent years, and new government institutions supporting gender equality policies have been created. A major reform was implemented in 2006 when a highly contested 'integrated anti-discrimination policy' was adopted, justified with reference to the importance of institutionalising intersectional approaches to human rights violations. The *Equality and Discrimination Ombud* was formed to combat discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, disability and age. It replaced already existing gender equality agencies and merged the tasks of the *Gender Equality Ombud,* the *Gender Equality Board of Appeals*, the *Gender Equality Centre* and the *Centre against Ethnic Discrimination* (Halsaa, Nyhagen Predelli and Thun, 2008: 42). Although the new equality and anti-discrimination machinery provides access for feminist and women's groups and also influences government policies dealing with equal opportunity issues, the opportunity structure for access and influence has dwindled as a consequence of the reorganisation.

The main struggles of the women's movement in 1970s Norway were related to issues such as abortion, EU membership, gender equality legislation, child care, political representation, and domestic abuse. The movement consisted of a mix of radical, liberal and socialist feminist organisations. Indigenous Sami women have publicly articulated their interests since the mid-1970s, and established their own organisations in the late 1980s. The first organisation for ethnic minority women in Norway, the *Foreign Women's Group (FWG)*, was formed in Oslo in 1979. In 1989, the FWG transformed into the highly profiled and politically influential *MiRA Resource Centre for Black, Immigrant and Refugee Women.* Since then, many immigrant organisations for women have been established throughout the country,

[10] See various UNDP reports, including UNDP, 2002.

but most of these are at regional or local levels rather than at national level (Nyhagen Predelli, 2006).[11]

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 Ortbals, 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*) 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 Women's Institute and the Socialist Party, PSOE (Valiente, 1995). The Women's Institute 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 that initially consisted of an equal number of women and men, and also through the creation of an array of new laws supporting gender equality (Bustelo and Ortbals, 2007). Spain has only recently begun to 'tak[e] its very first steps in institutionalizing intersectionality in policy-making and equality bodies' (Bustelo 2009: 542).

The development of a broad second-wave women's movement took off in Spain towards the end of 1975, after Franco's dictatorship had ended. Ethnic majority women mobilised both within existing political parties on the left, and in women's associations established outside the party system. Important issues on the agenda were access to abortion and to contraception, legislation regarding divorce and male family authority, and women's rights in the labour market. The first ethnic minority women's organisations in Spain were formed by women immigrants from Latin

[11] For a discussion of relations between majority and minority women's organisations in Norway, see Halsaa et al., (2008).

America in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Roma women in Spain have also formed feminist organisations.[12]

The **United Kingdom** has a strong record of prohibiting discrimination based on gender, but substantive measures to reduce gender inequality have largely been absent. In 1995, the UK was classified by McBride Stetson and Mazur (1995) as a country with a gender policy machinery that enjoyed high influence on equal employment policies, but the policy machinery was considered as giving 'low access' to feminist groups (ibid.: 275). The relatively strong position of the then Equal Opportunities Commission was taken as an indicator of the high influence enjoyed by this specific gender policy machinery on equal employment policies.

Since 1997, with the election of the Labour Government, the gender policy machinery in the UK has developed significantly in terms of new institutions and wider access to feminist and women's groups. Today it could be argued that the various parts of the policy machinery in the UK is giving relatively high access to a small and stable number of women's organisations that actively seek to influence government policy (Nyhagen Predelli et al., 2008). The gender machinery in place under the last Labour government was, however, considered relatively weak in terms of its political influence, and feminist and women's groups did not always think it worthwhile to direct their advocacy and lobbying efforts through institutions such as the Gender Equality Unit (previously named the Women and Equality Unit). Whether the gender equality machinery will change under the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition, which was elected in May 2010, is an open question.

A significant development towards an intersectional approach to inequality by the UK government took place with the establishment of the *Equality and Human Rights* Commission, which includes gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion and belief, and age in its remit. The *Government Equalities Office* is leading the government's overall strategy on equality with a lead role for policies related to the equality strands of gender and sexuality (other major equality strands include disability, age, race, and faith/belief, but the responsibility for these has been located

[12] For a discussion of relations between majoritised and minoritised women's organisations in Spain, see Sandu et al., (2008).

within various other government departments). As in Norway, women's movement organisations in the UK are concerned with the possibility that gender might receive lesser attention from government within an intersectional approach to inequality. In April 2010, the new Equality Act was passed by the UK parliament. The new Act, which harmonises and replaces previous laws pertaining to discrimination (including the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Race Relations Act 1976) by consolidating them into a single act, is expected to take effect in October 2010.

The 1970s Women's Liberation Movement in the UK included liberal, radical, Marxist and socialist women's groups, and the political demands agreed to by the movement were centred on labour market rights (equal pay and opportunities), access to abortion and contraception, child care, legal and financial independence for women, lesbian women's rights, and freedom from male violence. The first women's organisations established by ethnic minority women in the UK were also formed in the 1970s, and included the Brixton Black Women's Group, Liverpool Black Sisters, Manchester Black Women's Co-operative, and the Muslim Ladies Circle.[13]

1.5 Religious regimes

The principle of religious freedom is enshrined in government legislation in Norway, Spain and the UK. However, the three countries demonstrate different 'religious regimes', including both similar and dissimilar aspects in the relationship between religion and the state. All three countries have a historical Christian majority Church, while other religions have first and foremost become established through post-World War II 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 for some religions or

[13] For a discussion of disputes and conflicts between majority and minority women's organisations in the UK, see Nyhagen Predelli et al., (2008).

support for a particular tradition' in the form of the Roman Catholic Church (Fox 2008: 121).

Fox describes an active state religion as a situation where '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 describes '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 multitiered recognition systems for religions in which religions in each category are given different privileges and levels of support' (ibid.: 121).[14]

In **Norway**, the constitution establishes the Lutheran Church (formally entitled *the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway*) as the state religion but also guarantees religious freedom (Fox 2008: 118).[15] The state provides financial support to both the state Church and other registered religions in relation to the proportion of the population claiming membership of various religious associations. Although religious organisations are free to decide whether they want to register or not, in order to receive state funds, a religion must be registered by county officials. This has led to a rapid increase in the number of registered religious organisations.

[14] 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).

[15] The facts about state religion in Norway, Spain and the UK referred to in these paragraphs are taken from Fox (2008).

Although religious freedom is guaranteed by the state, there are tensions between the majority society and religious minorities, especially Muslim minority communities, in relation to issues such as the building of places of worship and the wearing of headscarves by Muslim women and girls. The Norwegian Equality Tribunal has recently declared that the current Police Uniform regulations, which deny uniformed police the right to wear religious headgear, are in conflict with anti-discrimination legislation.[16] There are no general restrictions on wearing religious symbols in Norway, but there have also been individual cases of employers prohibiting hijab in the work place. These cases were presented to the Norwegian Gender Equality Ombud as cases of gender discrimination under the Gender Equality Act and, more recently, under the new Act against Ethnic and Religious discrimination from 2005. The Ombud has found that a ban on hijab is in violation of both prohibition grounds (Siim and Skjeie, 2008: 332).

While **the UK** has no written constitution, its official religions are the Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). In general, the UK government does not provide funding to the state churches, with the exception of funds for the repair of historical church buildings (Fox 2008: 120). The Government does, however, fund several thousand faith schools, most of which are Anglican and Catholic. A small minority of the publicly-funded faith schools are Jewish, Methodist, Sikh, Muslim, Greek Orthodox, and Seventh Day Adventist. Although religious freedom is provided by law, there are limitations on some minority religions (for example Scientology). In the UK, relations between the state and Muslim communities are highly politicised due to the terrorist attacks on London in July 2005. Issues regarding the wearing of religious symbols and headgear are also controversial in the UK, where, for example, in November 2008, an employment tribunal declared that British Airways could legally demand that one of their female employees must stop wearing a piece of Christian jewellery. On the other hand, in May 2009, a school agreed that a Sikh girl should be allowed to wear a ceremonial dagger while taking her exam.[17] Debates about Muslim women's clothing increased

[16] http://www.diskrimineringsnemnda.no/wips/1416077327/ [accessed 17 September 2010].
[17] These examples are from the U.S. State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*, available at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127343.htm [accessed September 17, 2010].

after the former Foreign Affairs Minister, Jack Straw, in 2006 claimed that the niqab, or 'covering people's faces', implies separateness and the development of 'parallell communities'.[18] Both Muslim and non-Muslim groups reacted to Straw's views, and some Muslim groups accused the then minister of religious discrimination and a lack of understanding of Muslims. The debate about religious symbols and clothing illustrates how issues of multiculturalism, integration and social cohesion are highly contested in the UK.

The **Spanish** constitution protects 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. However, the state must consider the religious beliefs of Spanish society and maintain relations of cooperation with the Catholic Church and other denominations. The Catholic Church has a privileged status defined by a series of accords between the Government and the Church and Government tax forms include the option of donating taxes to the Catholic Church (ibid.) Furthermore, the government funds Catholic chaplains for the military, hospitals and prisons, supports private Catholic schools, and gives the Catholic Church tax benefits that are not given to other religions. In Spain, non-Catholic religions (including Judaism, Islam, and Protestant Christians) have separate agreements with the government (these give official recognition to marriages within these religions and tax-exempt status, and the right to religious education in public schools). Some religions do not have official recognition and are considered 'cultural associations' (Scientology) and some also choose to register as a cultural association rather than a religion due to the long-winded paper process involved in registering as a religion. There is a register of minority religions held by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs within the Ministry of Justice. According to Fox (2008), 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.

Below we present more detailed information about the religious regimes in Norway, Spain, and the UK. Again, we wish to emphasise that this report is a work in

[18] "'Remove full veils' urges Straw", at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/5411954.stm [accessed April 9, 2010].

progress, and that more comparable information across the three countries will have to be solicited further.

1.5.1 Norway

As stated above, Norway has a historical Christian majority Church, while other religions have mainly become established through post-World War II immigration. Fox (2008) characterises Norway as having *an active state religion* through the Lutheran State Church. In 2008, 82 per cent of the population were members of the Lutheran State Church of Norway. A further 10 per cent belong to other faiths and 'life stance' communities. In absolute numbers, the State Church has 3.9 million members, while other Protestant Christian denominations have 166,000 registered members.[19] Included in this last figure is the Pentecostal Movement with its 40,000 members.[20] Muslim faith communities in Norway have 84,000 members.[21]

There has been a steady decrease in membership in the State Church of Norway (from 94 per cent in 1970, to 88 per cent in 1980, and 82 per cent in 2008). Only 10 per cent of the members attend church services or meetings more than once a month, but the state church is still important for its members during national and religious holidays, for rituals like weddings and baptisms, etc. (Plesner, 2008: 91-92).

Traditionally, the Pentecostal movement/church has been the largest Christian community outside the state church in Norway. Because of the high number of Catholic migrants from Poland during recent years, the Pentecostal Church has now become the third largest church in Norway, with the Roman Catholic Church having taken second place after the Lutheran State Church.[22] The Pentecostal movement is a lay movement without a fixed liturgy and with no sacraments. One characteristic of this charismatic movement is the focus on direct and personal experience of God

[19] US State Department, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009,* available at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127329.htm [accessed 17 September 2010].
[20] The first Pentecostal congregation in Norway was established in1916.
[21] The Norwegian Humanist-Ethical Association has 76,000 members; the Evangelical-Lutheran Free Church approximately 20,000 members; and the Methodists 13,000 members. Smaller faith communities include Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddist and Ba'Hai communities.
[21] Seven per cent of the population in Norway do not belong to any religious community (Plesner, 2008: 92).
[22] The Roman Catholic Church in Norway has 54,000 members, compared with 40,000 members in the Pentecostal Churches.

through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. As in other countries in Europe, and in other parts of the world, the Norwegian Pentecostal movement consists of a number of rather different and independent Free Church congregations (Assemblies of God, Church of God, The Full Gospel Church, Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance, etc.). There are about 280 local Pentecostal churches in Norway.[23] Each congregation is an independent faith community; however, the movement as a whole has a 'Leader Council' which is an advisory, but not a decision-making, body (Thorbjørnsrud, 2005: 285).

Constitutionally, the Lutheran monopoly in Norway was abolished in 1964, when free exercise of religion was adopted. But Article 2 of the Constitution still declares that 'The Evangelical-Lutheran religion shall remain the official religion of the State. The inhabitants professing it are bound to bring up their children in the same'. There are provisions for freedom of religion or belief on the one hand, and provisions for the Evangelical-Lutheran religion to be the official religion of the state on the other (Lindholm, 2009: 3-4). For example, the King of Norway must confess to the Evangelical-Lutheran religion, and at least half of the ministers in Government also have to do so. Only ministers of Lutheran faith ('the King in Church Cabinet') can make decisions concerning matters of relevance to the Church doctrine, such as appointing bishops. Although State Church bodies have been delegated power and autonomy on many issues, 'the King in Church Cabinet' still executes important functions. Furthermore, the Church of Norway has a privileged position in public institutions such as hospitals, the military, prisons, police and nursing homes, where priests are present and have space to organise church service, etc. (Furseth, 2009).

The rights of religious minorities in Norway have gradually improved. In 1814, when the Constitution was adopted, no religious minorities, not even Christian denominations, were allowed to assemble without the permission of the majority church (Plesner, 2008: 92). The Dissenters Act of 1845 allowed Christian denominations of Norwegian citizens the right to establish their own faith communities. In 1851 the ban on Jews was abolished; in 1891 non-Christian faith communities were allowed; in 1897 the ban on monastic orders was set aside but

[23] http://www.pinsebevegelsen.no/sider/tekst.asp?side=395.

Jesuits were not admitted to Norway until 1956 (Kulturdepartementet, 2006). Only in 1969, when the Faith Communities Act replaced the Dissenters Act, did all faith communities in Norway obtain the same basic rights (for more details, see Plesner 2008: 93).

The new Anti-discrimination Act (2006) further improves the right to religious freedom because it includes protection against discrimination on the basis of religion and belief (ibid.: 93). Freedom of religion and non-discrimination on the grounds of religion are clearly established in terms of public funding: the Norwegian State provides financial support for all faith and life stance communities on an equal basis. All religious communities, including 'minority' religions and life stance communities that are registered by county officials can apply for funding in relation to the number of individuals who are members. One result of this system is that religious communities, from the state church to mosques and synagogues, register individual members. Likewise, all registered faith and life stance communities can certify marriages, and religious schools receive state subsidy.

In Norway, however, the anti-discrimination legislation pertaining to gender provides general exemption rights to communities of faith (Skjeie, 2007; Siim and Skjeie, 2008: 328-329). These rights are contested, and proposals to abolish the exemption of 'the inner life of faith communities' from the Gender Equality Act are currently being discussed (Barne- og Likestillingsdepartementet, 2008; Økland and Halsaa, 2008; Solhøy et al., 2010).

However, women have gradually demanded access and have been admitted to more formal positions within the Lutheran State Church. Soon after the legal ban on female priests was abolished in 1956, the first female priest was ordained in 1961. Gender equality has gradually gained ground, in line with public gender equality policies. In 1961, six of the nine bishops in the state church argued that female priests were against the word of God, whereas today all of the bishops support the appointment of women bishops. In 1993, a significant barrier was broken when the 'King in Church Cabinet' appointed the first female bishop. The relatively liberal practices of the State Church, comparatively speaking, are also demonstrated in the – contested – appointment of gay and lesbian priests.

Contrary to the state church, the number of members of Muslim faith communities has gradually increased and a growing number of Muslims choose to register as members of Muslim faith communities. In 1980 there were 1,000 members and in 2008 almost 84,000. The different Muslim faith communities are based on various strands of Islam, and related to the immigrants' national background (Daugstad and Østby, 2009). In addition to those born into the Muslim faith, there are approximately 900 – 1000 converts to Islam in Norway, and most of them are women (Jacobsen, 2009: 19).

Islam is a relatively new religion in the Norwegian society, introduced with the migration from Pakistan that started in the late 1960s. Among the Muslim population in Norway, Sunnis are in the majority, with a strong presence of the Pakistani Barelwi movement. The Barelwi movement is an expression of traditional folk-religiosity, with a strong basis in the Pakistani countryside. Twenty per cent of Muslims in Norway are Shia (Jacobsen, 2009: 21). Recent migration from Iraq and Afghanistan has led to rapid growth and changes in the Shia milieu.

There are 30 mosques and Muslim organisations in Oslo. The first mosque that was built for this specific purpose, according to the required guidelines, was finished in 1995. The first mosque in Norway, however, was established by Barelwi Pakistanis in Oslo in 1974 (the Islamic Cultural Centre). The first Shia mosque started in 1975 and today there are seven Shia congregations in Oslo. According to Strandhagen (2008: 40), it is quite common for Muslims to make use of various mosques, although one can be a formal member of just one. There are diverging opinions of politics within the various mosques.

A number of new organisations were established in the 1990s, among them the Islamic Women's Group of Norway (*Islamsk Kvinnegruppe Norge*) in 1991 (Nyhagen Predelli, 2003b: 24).[24] The Islamic Council of Norway (*Islamsk råd*) was established in 1993 (after a dialogue initiative from the Church of Norway) (Jacobsen, 2009: 21). It is an umbrella organisation for 41 membership organisations all over the country,

[24] The Islamic Women's Group Norway was abolished in 2005.

with a total of over 60,000 members. The Islamic Council has gained some legitimacy, and is active in attempting to unify Norwegian Muslims and to create a common normative Islamic practice on certain issues (Jacobsen, 2009: 22). The Council increasingly acts as 'liaison' with public authorities. The Shia imam Council (*Shiaimamrådet*) was established in 2006 (Strandhagen, 2008: 39). The Muslim Student Society (MSS) started in 1995, the Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU) in 1996. A Shia youth organisation *DIN* was established in 2007. Generally, religiously-based organising has increased tremendously in Norway, also due to state funding. According to Siim and Skjeie (2008: 328), religion is the single most important basis for immigrant organising in Norway.

1.5.2 Spain

Roman Catholicism is by far the largest denomination of Christianity present in Spain. According to a July 2009 report by the Spanish Centre of Sociological Research,[25] 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. Despite a relatively high degree of religious belief, 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 attend church some times in a year, nine per cent attend a few 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 increasingly 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.[26] In sum, being a Catholic in today's Spain has less to do with regular attendance at mass, and more to do with self-identity and with the observance of rituals such as baptism, communion, marriage, and funerals.

[25] 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.
[26] http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Boletines/36/BDO_36_index.html.

In Spain the law prohibits the collection of census data based on religious belief, which limits the ability to present accurate figures on religious adherence in the country. However, it is estimated that there are 35 million Catholics in Spain,[27] and the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities (FEREDE) estimates that there are 1.2 million Evangelical Christians and other Protestants. Moreover, the 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.

In June 2007, the Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) Register of Religious Entities[28] listed 12,418 Catholic Church entities. There were 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 is probably much larger. Already by the end of 2008 the number of MOJ registered Muslim religious entities had increased to 641.[29] Moreover, some religious groups choose to register as cultural organisations 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.[30] The Law of Religious Freedom of 1980 implements the constitutional provision for freedom of religion, and establishes a legal framework and certain privileges for religious organisations. To enjoy the benefits of this regime, religious organisations must be entered in the above-mentioned 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 law.

The Spanish Constitution (Article 16) 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 respects this

[27] 'Religious Demography (Spain)', The Association of Religion Data Archives, available at http://www.thearda.com [accessed 17 September 2010].
[28] See http://dgraj.mju.es/EntidadesReligiosas/.
[29] http://www.euro-islam.info/2010/03/08/islam-in-spain/ [accessed 31 August 2010].
[30] US State Department, International Religious Freedom Report (2007), see http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/.

right in practice. Even though there is no state religion, the Catholic Church enjoys privileges that are defined by a series of accords with the Government and unavailable to other faiths. The Government seeks to protect the right to religious freedom and generally does 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, as tax payers can choose whether they want to contribute to either the Catholic Church or to non-governmental organisations.[31] Religious institutions other than the Catholic Church are not included in the voluntary tax contribution system (i.e., religions in Spain do not have equal tax status).

Representatives of Evangelical, Jewish, and Islamic faiths signed bilateral agreements with the Government in 1992, due to their 'deeply rooted status' in Spanish society. 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[32] (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; Buddhists and Jehovah's Witnesses in 2007. However, these religions do not

[31] US State Department, International Religious Freedom Report 2009, available at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127338.htm [accessed 17 September 2010].

[32] 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).

enjoy the same benefits as the other religions than have bilateral agreements.[33] In Spain, Scientology does not have official recognition and is thus not considered a religion, but a 'cultural association'.

Detailed information about financing for religious organisations 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 Alejandro Torres Gutiérrez. According to Torres Gutiérrez (2005), 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 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 (Torres Gutiérrez 2005: 11).[34] This situation can be said to breach the principle of non-discrimination due to religious factors especially since Spain is governed by the principle of State-Church separation. The second channel is indirect through the granting of tax exemptions and benefits, which, as stated above, particularly favours the Catholic Church. According to Torres Gutiérrez (2005), such differences are in fact unconstitutional and/or 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, and the situation for minority religions in Spain is comparatively worse than that for minority religions in Norway and the UK.

Since 2004 the Foundation Pluralism and Coexistence (Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia), which depends on the Secretary of Justice, has been providing funding to minority religious 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,

[33] US State Department, International Religious Freedom Report 2009, available at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127338.htm [accessed 17 September 2010].
[34] Disposiciones adicionales 11a, 12a y 23a de la Ley de Presupuestos Generales del Estado para (2005).

and Spanish classes for imams and women.[35] This initiative is part of the Alliance of Civilizations framework implemented by the Spanish government in 2008.

As noted above, there are more than one million Muslims in Spain. 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 converts, immigrants who have obtained citizenship, and second and third generation immigrants.[36] Although there are no official data, it is estimated that there are about 30,0000 Muslim converts in Spain. In 1992 the Spanish government designated the Islamic Commission of Spain as the Spanish Muslim community proxy for religious matters.

Today's growth of Islamic associations in Spain is illustrated by the emergence of new organisations such as the Muslim Federation of Spain, or Federación de Musulmanes de España (FEME), the third Islamic association at the national level. The region of Catalonia has the largest Muslim community in Spain (350,000 individuals according to the Andalusi Observatory, 2008).

The law in Spain provides for optional Catholic education in public schools. Muslim and Protestant leaders have also 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

[35] http://www.inforislam.com/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=25&layout=blog&Itemid=133&limitstart=5 [accessed 31 August 2010].
[36] Second-generation Muslims - born or raised in Spain - amount to 200,000 individuals.

Commission estimated that there were 74,000 Muslim students who would take classes in Islamic education if possible. Observatorio Andalusi gave an estimate of 120,000 Muslim school-age children and called for the hiring of 285 teachers to provide religious instruction for these students.

In general, the Government has not placed any legal restrictions on the opening of new places of worship; however, representatives of minority religious groups sometimes experience difficulties opening places of worship, most frequently because of resistance from neighbourhood groups. According to the MOJ Office of Religious Affairs, local governments are obliged to provide land for the opening of places of worship; however, this law has allegedly 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 (2008), 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 Evangelical Christians 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'[37] notes that mosques organise community life of Muslims in Spain. According to state-produced figures mentioned above, there are more than 600 registered Muslim organisational entities in Spain. In addition to 13 large centres or mosques, and mosques of various sizes and locations, there are also hundreds of small praying spaces located in garages and not always apt for community prayers. Moreover, some of these are not registered in the Minority Religions Registry of the Justice Department; some prefer to develop their activities secretly. The alleged fear, negative associations and suspicion that building of new

[37] Argiya, E. and Martín Muñoz, G. (2009), *Musulmanes en España. Guída de Referencia*, Madrid: Casa Árabe.

mosques raises among non-Muslim citizens in Spain may mean that future mosques may need to be located outside the down-town, in the outskirts of city centres.[38]

According to a 2007 report by Metroscopia[39] 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. Based on these figures, there seems to be a case for the building of increased religious tolerance in Spain.

Revised Law of Freedom of Religion 7/1980[40]

The Spanish government will take to Congress the new Organic Law of Religious and Conscience Freedom, according to government sources. This will regulate aspects such as Muslims' right to not work on Fridays, or for Jews not to work on Saturdays. There are now two drafts prepared by Justice Secretary Francisco Caamaño. One is more general, 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 recently explained that the new Law of Religious Freedom will increase the participation of autonomous communities and local political authorities. For instance, it will regulate issues such as new temple construction. From now on, religions will have the right, given certain conditions, of obtaining free land from their town halls for the building of 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.

[38] Sanmartín, O. R. (2009) 'Los Españoles tienen miedo a las mezquitas', *El Mundo*, 21 April. See also Ortuño Aix (2006).
[39] Metroscopia (2007), *Musulmanes de España: Segunda Oleada del Estudio de Opinión a Población Musulmana de Origen Inmigrante*. Madrid: Metroscopia.
[40] 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.

1.5.3 United Kingdom

As mentioned above, Fox (2008) characterises 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. 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).

In the UK, Christianity, including Catholic, Presbyterian, Pentecostal and other denominations, is the major religion. Like in other European countries, including Norway and Spain, Islam is the second largest religion in the UK in terms of the number of people adhering to it. Although religious freedom is provided by law, there are limitations on some minority religions (for example Scientology). While the UK has no written constitution, its official religions are the Church of England (Anglican) and the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). Furthermore, each of the four nations (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales), has distinct religious forms and practices (Weller, 2008). In Northern Ireland there is no state religion, but Catholics constitute the largest denomination with Presbyterians the second largest. Wales, on the other hand, has no single predominant Christian denomination that serves as the national focus (ibid).

The Christian religion also influences government legislation in the UK, as bishops have seats in the House of Lords. However, the practice of preferential treatment of one religion through the allocation of parliamentary seats is being questioned within the context of a multi-religious Britain.[41]

The early presence of Muslims in the UK can be attributed to slavery in the 18th century, and later also to immigration from the 1960s and onwards. Hussain and Choudhury (2007) traced the presence of Muslims in the UK from the eighteenth

[41] http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/cofe/cofe_1.shtml [accessed April 15, 2010].

century, when sailors from the Indian subcontinent were employed by the British East India Company. In the 1960s, large scale migration of unskilled male workers from South Asia took place. Muslims were also among the East African Asians who began arriving in the late 1960s and early 1970s under pressure from the 'Africanisation' policies in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. In the 1980s, Muslims also began to arrive in the UK in significant numbers as refugees from the Balkans, East Africa, the Middle East, and Turkey. Relations between the British State and Muslim communities have recently become highly politicised, due to the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001 and in London in 2005. Government programmes under the previous Labour government have sought to reduce the threat of terrorism through the so-called 'prevent agenda' which has specifically targeted intervention in and engagement with Muslim communities (see below).[42]

In general, the UK government does not provide funding to the state churches, with the exception of funds for the repair of historical church buildings (Fox, 2008: 120). The government does, however, fund several thousand faith schools, most of which are Anglican and Catholic. A small minority of the publicly funded faith schools are Jewish, Methodist, Sikh, Muslim, Greek Orthodox, and Seventh Day Adventist. Moreover, the UK Government does not fund purely religious activities but through Local Authorities, the Government engages faith-based organisations or groups to provide public services. Faith based organisations were included in the framework of third sector organisations in the late 1990s; however, in order to receive public funding they must, just like all other organisations, demonstrate that they are working in ways that ensure the delivery of key government policies and strategies.[43] The UK government recognises that faith-based bodies and religious organisations contribute significantly to the progress of society. Therefore, they are eligible to be awarded a tender or grants to deliver publicly funded services such as homeless shelters, or pregnancy advice. However, funds received are not primarily to be used to promote solely religious activities but wider faith-based work for the common good. All religious organisations providing public services are subject to the Government's equality legislation, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against

[42] See http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/prevent/faithcapacity/ [accessed April 15, 2010].
[43] http://www.fbrn.org.uk/%E2%80%98non-faith-specific%E2%80%99-central-government-funding [accessed 29 March 2010].

faith-based organisations in tendering processes. Moreover, faith-based organisations are subject to the discrimination laws that apply to all other organisations, meaning they should not discriminate against clients based on their gender, ethnicity, faith, and so on. In particular circumstances, however, faith-based organisations can receive funding to provide services for a particular religious community as part of service provision to enhance service access to particular vulnerable groups in the community; one example is the provision of Kosher 'Meals on Wheels' to older Jewish people.[44]

In 2005, as part of the UK Government's racial equality strategy, engaging with faith communities was identified as one means to deliver essential government policies related to crime reduction, anti-social behaviour, and issues affecting young people. The Government created the Faith Communities Consultative Council with membership drawn from the nine major world faiths: Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism. The Council is a non-statutory body, chiefly concerned with issues relating to community cohesion, integration, the development of sustainable communities, neighbourhood renewal, and social inclusion. The Council also oversees the engagement between central government and faith communities and takes a broad and strategic view of the role of faith communities in national life.

Furthermore, the Government has set up the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund to support capacity building and inter-faith programmes including the increased participation of faith communities in civil society. In its first year, 2006, 588 organisations benefited from a funding pot of £8.8 million.[45] In 2007, the fund's focus was on citizenship and working with women and young people; out of the 1,229 who applied 343 were successful in receiving a total of £4.3 million .[46] A three-year framework was launched in 2008 with a funding of £7.5 million to support activities that promote stronger dialogue between different faiths and beliefs to build

[44] http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/ensuringalevel [accessed 29 March 2010].
[45] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/160560.pdf [accessed 29 March 2010].
[46] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/improving-opportunity.pdf [accessed 29 March 2010].

community cohesiveness.[47] Another funding source specifically aiming at Muslim communities was also launched in 2007; the Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund. This fund, with £5.5 million, supported local authorities in their work to tackle violent extremism through programmes that intended to encourage Muslim communities to reject and condemn such extremism.[48]

In recognition of the fact that the UK has become more ethnically, racially and culturally diverse, the government aims to build a national community with a shared set of values, together with a sense of purpose and belonging for each community to benefit from its diversity. The Government views the engagement of faith communities as relevant for community cohesion. Through the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Government launched a strategy in 2005 to increase race equality and community cohesion.[49] The strategy extends protection against religious discrimination in the provision of goods and services.[50] Legal protection against discrimination on the basis of religion and belief has been instituted in the 1998 Human Rights Act, which guarantees freedom of religion; the 2006 Equality Act and the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act, and the new Equality Act 2010.

The UK's population is culturally diverse, and in the most current population census (from 2001), white Christians were identified as the largest single group. The census revealed that, in total, 72 per cent of the UK population identify as Christian. The 41 million people who identified as Christian included Church of England, Church of Scotland, the Church in Wales, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations. Three per cent of the UK population identified as Muslim in the 2001 Census, which amounted to roughly 1.6 million people. [51]

More specifically, in England and Wales, eight out of 10 ethnically white identify with the Christian religion, while nearly seven out of ten black Caribbean and black

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[47] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/11529661.pdf [accessed 29 March 2010].
[48] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/320330.pdf [accessed 29 March 2010].
[49] http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/ [accessed 31 March 2010].
[50] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/152393.pdf [accessed 31 March 2010].
[51] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=293 [accessed 29 January 2010].

African identify as Christian. In contrast, more than nine in 10 Pakistani and Bangladeshi identify as Muslim.[52] However, Weller (2008) points out that white Muslims constitute 11.6 per cent of the Muslim population, which includes Middle Eastern respondents who opted for the 'white' descriptor amongst the pre-set categories of response of the Census. Thus in the UK we are most likely to meet Christians who are either ethnically white or black, and Muslims who are of Pakistani background. Although 41 million of the population identified as Christian in the last census, only four million Christians attend service on a regular basis (excluding figures for Northern Ireland). In comparison, it is thought that 50 per cent of Muslims worship on a regular basis.[53] According to a 2003 study from the Office of National Statistics cited by The Association of Religious Data Archives, 29 per cent of British people identify with Anglicanism, 10 per cent with the Catholic Church, and 14 per cent with other Protestant Churches.[54] The Pentecostal movement in the UK, which numbers just under one million adherents, is the 'the fastest-growing group of Christians in the UK'.[55] Figures from the English Church Census, carried out by the charity *Christian Research* in 2005, found that there were 2 227 Pentecostal churches in England alone.[56]

1.5.4 Summary statistics on religion in Norway, Spain and the UK

As stated above, we wish to develop further the comparative indicators of gender, religious and citizenship regimes in Norway, Spain and the UK. In order to offer a quick glimpse of differences pertaining to religion between the three countries, we have put together some statistics from the American Religious Data Archive which, among other things, demonstrates that both religious belief and attendance are higher in Spain than in Norway and the UK. While a clear majority of the respondents in Norway, Spain and the UK state that they have a 'belief in God' and they belong to a religious denomination, only a minority of respondents in the three

[52] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/ethnic_group_statistics/downloads/ethnic_group_statistics.pdf [accessed 29 January 2010].
[53] According to research carried out by the charity *Christian Research*, cited in the US State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report 2009,* available at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127343.htm [accessed 17 September 2010].
[54] 'Religious Demography (United Kingdom)', The Association of Religion Data Archives, available at http://www.thearda.com [accessed 17 September 2010].
[55] http://www.eauk.org/resources/info/statistics/2005englishchurchcensus.cfm [accessed 20 September 2010].
[56] http://www.eauk.org/resources/info/statistics/2005englishchurchcensus.cfm [accessed 20 September 2010].

countries attend religious services on a regular basis. Both in Norway and the UK, less than half of the respondents identify as 'a religious person' and/or find comfort and strength in religion. Thus it is possible to consider one self to have a belief in God and belong to a religious denomination without actually considering oneself a religious person. In contrast, more than half of the respondents in Spain report that they identify as a religious person and/or find comfort and strength in religion.

Table 1.5 Religious belonging, identification, practice and belief in Norway, Spain and the UK (per cent)

	Norway	Spain	UK
Belong to a religious denomination	90.7	84.1	83.1
Identifies as a religious person	46.9	63.8	41.6
Attend religious services at least once a month	12.5	36.1	19.5
Believe in God	68.8	82.9	71.7
Finding comfort and strength from religion	39.5	54.2	37.5

(Source: The Association of Religion Data Archives, available at http://www.thearda.com [accessed 17 September 2010].)

1.6 A sociological perspective on religion

In our research, we approach religion from a sociological perspective which emphasises religion as a set of beliefs and practices that provide *meaning* in people's lives. Along with Beckford, we are interested in 'analys[ing] the processes whereby the meaning of the category of religion is, in various situations, intuited, asserted, doubted, challenged, rejected, substituted, re-cast, and so on' (Beckford 2003: 3).

Sociologists of religion have forwarded various definitions of religion which usually fall into one of two major types: 1) inclusive definitions, which are often broad and functional, as they focus on what religion *does,* and 2) exclusive definitions, which are often narrow and substantive, as they focus on what religion *is*. Substantive definitions are usually based on Western, and particularly Christian, notions of reality, and can function in exclusionary ways in the sense that a definitional

requirement of belief in divine beings might exclude other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism (McGuire, 1997: 10-14). Inclusive definitions, on the other hand, focus on religions in terms of how they provide people with a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and might thus be too broad, in that also secular, ideological and political beliefs provide people with a sense of identity and meaning. Such definitional problems have led Beckford (2003: 20) to argue that 'an all-purpose, universally acceptable definition of religion is unattainable' (see also Asad, 1993), while Beckford and Demerath (2007: 2) argue that the definition of religion should be viewed 'as an open-ended, often contested and on-going social process'. Moreover, scholars have questioned whether Islam is best described as 'a religion' or as a more encompassing phenomenon ('a complete way of life'; see Jacobsen, 2006: 44).

In our research, we are interested in both functional and substantive aspects of religious belief. Thus we are examining empirically how women we have interviewed talk about their religion, both in terms of what it *is,* and in terms of what it *does.* Descriptions of what religion is and does vary and changes according to which social context we are interested in. What we are trying to do is 'to map the varieties of meaning attributed to religion in social settings' (Beckford, 2003: 20) through case-studies of Christian and Muslim women in Norway, Spain and the UK.

1.7 Majority, minorities, and minoritisation processes

The concept of 'minority' generally refers to core elements such as reasonably 'stable ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which are different from the rest of the population, including a numerical minority position, non-dominance and a separate cultural identity which the minority itself wants to preserve' (Henrard, 2000: 30-48 in Freidenvall, 2010: 5). In this report, the concept of religious minority refers to numerical minorities, and 'minority women' refers to women in these groups. The word 'minoritised', however, refers to both the *relational* character of minority women, potentially being placed in an inferior and marginalised position in relation to majority women and men, and to minority men, and to *processes* of minoritisation where certain social ideas, thoughts and practices are associated with inferiority, 'backwardness', or oppression. Moreover, minoritisation refers to 'the active

processes of racialisation [or alternative processes of 'othering'] that are at work in designating certain attributes of groups in particular contexts as being in a "minority"' (Gunaratnam, 2003: 17; see also Chapter 2 of this Working Paper).
Anne Sofie Roald (2005: 20) discusses the meeting of ethnic Norwegians and people with a Muslim background in her book *Er muslimske kvinner undertrykt? (Are Muslim Women Oppressed?*). Relations between the religious majority and religious minorities are infused with power, she claims. The majority is inclined to perceive itself as carrying objective, universal truths – exempt from negotiation – compared to the minorities' representing 'strange' and 'weird' practices that ought to change. With Elias, Roald refers to mental mechanisms that make us inclined to compare our own ideals with the (worst) practices of 'the other' (Elias, 1994 in Roald, 2005: 20). In the empirical chapters of this report, we will see how the majority-minority problematic is conceived by our respondents in various ways.

Minoritisation processes do not only concern aspects of religion and ethnicity, but are also related to gender. Significantly, women are often discriminated against or prevented from taking on roles and duties on a par with men. Such discrimination takes place at various levels, including the state, employers, voluntary sector organisations (including religious ones), and families. As feminists, however, we also think it is important to reflect on how our own demands for gender equality might function in exclusionary ways and in ways that function to majoritise or hegemonise certain positions, while minoritising others. For example, many feminists would argue that gender equality policies must be formulated on the basis of 'gender as sameness'; that is, that women and men should have identical rights and be able to perform the same roles and take on the same duties, irrespective of their sex. In many ways, this 'gender as sameness' position has been taken on by the state, such as in demands for equal pay, equal vote and representation, child care, parental leave, and so on. In particular, 'sameness' feminists argue strongly that it is necessary for women to take in full-time roles in the labour market in order to secure financial independence. Other feminists, however, are less concerned with 'equality of outcome', and argue that gender equality policies must acknowledge that women and men have different strengths and weaknesses, and that such policies should first and foremost ensure the principle of equal or comparable *value* (rather than sameness in outcome). At times, the state may also support such a position. For

example, the Norwegian state has argued that parents who do not use nurseries for their children should receive a financial contribution equal to the state subsidy received by parents using nurseries. Such a policy acknowledges that some parents might value the upbringing of their children in a family environment, rather than in an organised childcare environment. Moreover, the policy to some extent 'devalues' parental participation in the labour market when children are under school-age. As women tend to be paid less than men, it is often most convenient for families to choose that mothers are the main caretakers as 'stay at home mums', rather than fathers. In effect, the policy thus devalues the participation of mothers in the labour market.

The 'sameness or difference' argument is particularly relevant in relation to a question about the extent to which universal welfare states and gender regimes based upon 'women-friendly' policies (Hernes, 1987) can become the basis for the inclusion of migrant women and for women with non-Christian religious identities. There is a growing concern with state feminism in a multicultural society. For example, the type of state feminism practiced in Scandinavian states, including Norway, is characterised by women's labour market participation, access to public childcare and political participation and representation, and a combination of mobilisation 'from below' and 'integration politics from above' (Siim and Skjeie, 2008: 338). However, faced with the challenge of a multicultural society, this form of state feminism has to deal with migrant groups practicing complementary or patriarchal gender norms (such as a male breadwinner system and/or arranged marriages). Some of the most urgent questions include how the present 'public' gender equality ideal of women and men sharing as many tasks, positions and responsibilities as possible actually manages to accommodate people with a gender equality ideal which emphasises complementary roles, and to what extent the dual breadwinner family model is contested and challenged by a male breadwinner family model. Our interviews with religious women in Norway, Spain and the UK highlight some of the contentious issues in debates about gender equality in multicultural, multi-faith societies.

1.8 Citizenship and immigration regimes

On the European Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), Norway is ranked number eight, the UK number nine, and Spain number 10, based on six indicators of policies regulating citizenship and immigration.[57] All three countries belong to the group of states considered to be 'partially favourable for promoting integration'.[58] Norway achieved its highest scores in relation to political participation, and worst with respect to access to nationality. In between were the scores related to long-term residence, family reunion, labour market access, and anti-discrimination policies.[59] Spain, on the other hand, was ranked highly on labour market access, family reunion and long-term residence policies, but lower on political participation, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination policies.[60] The UK, in turn, is particularly strong on anti-discrimination legislation and policies, while 'slightly favourable' on policies relating to labour market access, long-term residence, family reunion, and nationality. The UK's political participation scores are deemed 'half-way to best practice'.[61] Below we present more detailed information about the citizenship and immigration regimes in Norway, Spain, and the UK, focusing on contemporary policies.

1.8.1 Norway

Following the image of citizenship as a 'family tree' (Lister et al., 2007: 7), Norway belongs to the social democratic branch of liberal citizenship. Post-war immigration to Norway from countries outside Europe took off in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to increased demand for unskilled labour. At this time, young male workers, mainly from European countries and from North America, but also from African and Asian countries (including India, Pakistan and Morocco), came to take advantage of labour market opportunities. The immigration stop implemented in

[57] MIPEX measures policies to integrate migrants in 25 EU Member States and three non-EU countries. It uses over 140 policy indicators to create a rich, multi-dimensional picture of migrants' opportunities to participate in European societies. http://www.integrationindex.eu/topics/2657.html [accessed 13 August 2010].

[58] Sweden was the only country with policies that - in the overall ranking across six strands - were considered 'favourable' for promoting integration. http://www.integrationindex.eu/topics/2636.html [accessed 13 August 2010].

[59] http://www.integrationindex.eu/integrationindex/2479.html [accessed 13 August 2010].

[60] http://www.integrationindex.eu/integrationindex/2531.html [accessed 13 August 2010].

[61] http://www.integrationindex.eu/integrationindex/2583.html [accessed 13 August 2010].

1975, however, introduced restrictions on labour immigration. After 1975, a phase of immigration characterised by family moves began, with wives and children joining their husbands and fathers in Norway, as family reunion was permitted under the new Immigration Act. Another immigration phase includes refugees from a number of countries and world regions experiencing dictatorships and wars. Currently, the largest group of immigrants in Norway is of Polish origin. As of 1 January 2008, the immigrant population in Norway is estimated at 9.7 per cent of the total population, comprising 381,000 immigrants and 79,000 Norwegian-born individuals with immigrant parents living in Norway.[62] As in Spain and in the UK, immigration policy is a hot political issue, and the Norwegian Government is keen to control access to citizenship (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, 2008).

Since 1983, migrants living in Norway for three years or more have held the right to vote in local elections. After seven years of residence, immigrants with legal residence status can become citizens, and to do so they must demonstrate proficiency in one of the official languages (Norwegian or Sami). Since September 2008, applicants must pass an official test in either of these two languages. A proposal to allow dual nationality/dual citizenship through the recent Norwegian Nationality Act (2006) was rejected by the Government (Midtbøen, 2009: 535).

1.8.2 Spain

Following the image of citizenship as a 'family tree' (Lister et al., 2007: 7), Spain belongs to the civic republican tradition of citizenship (ibid,: 20). Spain has only recently experienced a large inflow of immigrants (see Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 2008), and the growth is particularly characterised by immigrants from African and Latin American countries such as Morocco, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia, and also from China, Pakistan, India and the Phillipines (Ayres and Barber, 2006). EU-migrants, among them from the United Kingdom and Romania, are also present in large numbers. In 2006 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted 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

[62] See http://www.ssb.no/innvbef_en/main.html.

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 initiative for the Alliance of Civilizations was taken by Spanish President, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, at the 59th 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 10 years before they can qualify for 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, amounting to about 12 per cent of the total population.[63] By 2009, the countries of origin providing the highest numbers of legally registered foreign residents in Spain are Morocco, Romania, Ecuador, Colombia, and the United Kingdom.[64]

1.8.3 United Kingdom

Again, following the image of citizenship as a 'family tree' (Lister et al., 2007: 7), the UK belongs to the social liberalism branch of liberal citizenship. The UK's model of citizenship is also described by scholars as multicultural; a model which promotes cultural and religious diversity with relatively easy access to citizenship and recognition of cultural differences (Kilic, Saharso, and Sauer, 2008). The history of empire and post-colonial immigration has strongly influenced the UK and has, among other things, led to the formulation of strong anti-racist and anti-discrimination laws and policies.

There are four main routes to the acquisition of citizenship in the UK: through descent, declaration, marriage, or adoption. Several laws have been enacted to

[63] Instituto Nacional de Estadística. Revisión del Padrón Municipal (2009) [Available at http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t20/e245/&file=inebase, accessed 29 September 2010, and at http://www.ine.es/ine/planine/planine09_dem.pdf, accessed 29 September 2010.]

[64] Source: Permanent Observatory on Immigration (2009). Data are gathered by the National Police and Civil Guard and are used by the Permanent Observatory on Immigration. 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. See http://extranjeros.mtas.es/es/InformacionEstadistica/.

review the immigration legislation since World War II, including the British Nationality Act 1948, the Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962, and the most recent law, the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act, which was passed in 2009.[65] The 2009 Act introduced a new policy of 'earned citizenship', and made further distinctions between different routes to citizenship for immigrants. The work route for highly skilled and skilled workers, the family route for individuals related to existing British citizens and permanent residents, and, finally, the protection route for refugees and migrants given humanitarian protection. The 2009 Act also outlines three stages migrants must go through before obtaining citizenship, from temporary residence to probationary citizenship, to British citizenship or permanent residence. Furthermore, the Act introduces the notion of 'Active citizenship', viewed as participation in the voluntary sector, which will speed up the application process significantly for individuals who volunteer to contribute to community activities. It is expected of newcomers to demonstrate their commitment to 'British values' and a 'British way of life'.

Immigrants with legal residence status are entitled to apply for citizenship after five years of residence in the UK,[66] but since 2005 applicants must additionally pass either a 'Life in the UK' test requiring English language proficiency and substantive knowledge about British history, politics, and culture, or an English for Speakers of Other Languages course, in order to become citizens. Statistics show that the main nationalities granted British citizenship in 2008 were Indian, Pakistani, Iraqi, Somali and Zimbabwean (Danzelman, 2009). The most recent available figures, from the 2001 UK Census, show that ethnic minorities make up 4.6 million individuals or 7.9 per cent of the UK total population.[67]

1.9 Chapter overview and labelling of research participants

This Working Paper consists of a summary of key findings, and seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces our research project and outlines some basic features

[65] http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2009/pdf/ukpga_20090011_en.pdf, [accessed 29 January 2010].
[66] If an individual is married to or a civil partner of a British citizen, he or she can apply for citizenship after three years of residence (http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/eligibility/ [accessed 15 January 2009].
[67] http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=273 [accessed 29 January 2010].

regarding issues of gender, religion and citizenship in Norway, Spain and the UK. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical perspectives of women's gendered citizenship and their gendered religious identity which informs our research. Chapter 3 briefly describes the three locations of our field work and discusses the methods employed for the field work and data analysis. It also details the analytical approach and questions applied to the analysis. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of our data on identity and discusses how participants in our study constructed the meaning of religion to their identities. It also examines the different types of religious figures admired by our interviewees. Chapter 5 provides an insight into how our research participants talk about citizenship more generally, and how they talk about 'religious citizenship' in particular. It also examines whether religion is presented as a resource or barrier to citizenship by the women we interviewed. Chapter 6 explores the discourses of religious women on gender equality, and on feminism and the women's movement. The conclusion and suggestions for good practice and policy implications can be found in Chapter 7.

In this report, we use the conventions described below when referring to our research participants from different religious traditions in Norway, Spain and the UK.

United Kingdom

Original labelling in UK country study	**Labelling used in this cross-country Working Paper**
Anglican	UK maj_maj
Pentecostal	UK maj_min
Sunni	UK min_maj
Shia	UK min_min

Norway

Original labelling in Norway country study	**Labelling used in this cross-country Working Paper**
A (Lutheran)	Norway maj_maj
B (Pentecostal)	Norway maj_min
C (Sunni)	Norway min_maj
D (Shia)	Norway min_min

Spain

Original labelling in Spain country study	**Labelling used in this cross-country Working Paper**
Maj_maj (Catholic)	Spain maj_maj
Min_maj (Pentecostal)	Spain **maj_min**
Maj_min (Sunni)	Spain **min_maj**
Min-Min (Shia)	Spain min-min

2 RELIGION, GENDER, FEMINISM AND CITIZENSHIP

2.1 Introduction

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.

2.2 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 organisations, 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 organisations 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 organisational 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 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 organisations 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 organisations 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 organisational religious structures (churches and mosques).

2.3 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 practices have 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 nineteenth and early twentieth 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 organisation *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 organisations 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’ applies 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 organisations 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 homosexuals 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.

2.4 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 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 organisations (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 organisations 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 organisation 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 nineteenth- 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, 2003a). 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 organisations, and we attempt to link citizenship practices within religious organisations 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.

2.5 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 the Convention for the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). 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 organisations 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 organisations, 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).

2.6 Religion, citizenship and identity

Our project attempts to examine ‘religious citizenship’ in particular contexts, those of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ religious organisations 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.[68] 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.[69] 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, and engage with others. These sites are not simply social locations or*

[68] Hudson (2003: 426) refers to this dimension of religious citizenship as part of a 'nation-state definition' of religious citizenship.
[69] Hudson (2003: 426) refers to this dimension of citizenship part of a 'civil-society definition' of religious citizenship.

> *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?

2.7 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.[70] 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 spheres' such as education and the labour market, and not in designated 'private spheres' such as the family and religious organisations, 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 organisations 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 organisations. 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 or of the 'God our Father' discourse (Høen, 2008; Thorbjørnsrud, 2007). In our project we explore the discourses of religious

[70] 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'.

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 organisations 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 organisations may be equally important for an inclusive gendered citizenship.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Brief overview of the research design

Our research design includes in-depth interviews with religious women from within the traditions of Christianity and Islam, and has been adapted to overall comparative ambitions of the project. It thus includes religious women from Norway, Spain and the UK. The Working Paper 4 research team has assessed different recruitment strategies in relation to the landscape of majoritised and minoritised religious organisations present within the three country contexts. For example, we have carefully considered the possibility of recruiting women from gendered religious organisations; that is, from organisations that are intentionally formed to establish collectives of religious women. Looking at the national level (capital-based), we found that only the United Kingdom displayed a sufficient number of such organisations to recruit from. The UK has a variety of religious women's organisations at the national level, representing a wide range of majority and minority faith traditions. While Norway and Spain have national organisations for Christian women, 'minority' religious organisations for women are generally absent at the national level. This is likely to be a reflection of the immigration histories experienced by Norway and Spain, both in terms of the different historical time-periods of immigration, and the different composition of immigrant groups.

Hence, we have chosen a recruitment strategy that enables us to produce rich and comparable qualitative data through focusing on religious organisations from within majority (Christian) and minority (Muslim) faith communities. Whilst Christianity has the largest number of followers in all three countries, Islam forms the second largest religion in all three countries due to immigration. A focus on both churches and mosques was thus deemed most feasible in order to facilitate recruitment and data production. We decided to adopt a four-dimensional strategy, including 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 immigrant group in each country) and Muslim 'minority' mosques (representing a smaller Muslim immigrant population in each country).

Christian majority churches (as state or official churches) were easily identifiable in each country, and a large church was chosen in each country context. In terms of Christian minority faiths, there are many traditions to choose from, including Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and so on. For all three countries, we have 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 examining the presence or absence of various Pentecostal faith traditions in all three countries, we have chosen to recruit women from Assembly of God churches.[71]

In terms of the major Islamic group, our strategy was to focus on the largest immigrant Muslim group in each country (Pakistanis in Norway and the UK, and Moroccans in Spain). 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. However, with the exception of Norway, it turned out to be difficult to recruit Shia women from within organised religious contexts, and the Shia women we interviewed in both Spain and the UK were often attending Sunni rather than Shia mosques due to the availability of designated spaces for women in some Sunni mosques and a lack of similar spaces for women in some Shia mosques. Thus, the Shia participants from Spain and the UK constituted a group which could not be identified with a particular place of worship.

[71] According to Anderson (2004: 94), the Assembly of God movement within Pentecostalism (at least in the UK) has been critical of centralised forms of organisational control in other Pentecostal movements such as the Elim movement, and has represented strong theological positions on the issues of 'initial evidence' and pre-millianism.

The following table represents our final recruitment strategy:

Table 3.1 Final recruitment strategy

Christianity	Islam
Majority-majority religion	**Minority-majority religion**
Norway: Lutheran State Church	Norway: Pakistani mosque (Sunni)
Spain: Roman Catholic Church	Spain: Moroccan mosque (Sunni)
UK: Church of England (Anglican)	UK: Pakistani mosque (Sunni)
Majority-minority religion	**Minority-minority religion**
Norway: Assembly of God (Pentecostal)	Norway: Shia mosque
Spain: Assembly of God (Pentecostal)	Spain: Shia women
UK: Assembly of God (Pentecostal)	UK: Shia women

3.2 Locations for our study

The findings discussed in this working paper are based on empirical evidence collected from a total of 60 in-depth interviews conducted with religious women in the East Midlands region of England, UK; in Oslo, Norway; and in Madrid, Spain. In Norway and Spain, the respective capitals were the primary locations for our study, as these are de facto the most ethnically diverse places in these two countries. In the UK, we chose to conduct our study within the county of Leicestershire in the East Midlands region of England, as this region is one of England's most diverse in terms of ethnicity. Moreover, next to London, Leicester is the most religiously diverse city in the UK.[72] More detailed information about the specific locations for our study can be found in the Working Papers for each individual country (Halsaa, Thun and Nyhagen Predelli 2010; Nyhagen Predelli and Manful 2010; Quintero and Nyhagen Predelli 2010).

[72] The UK case of Leicester/Leicestershire is, however, somewhat different from Oslo and Madrid, as Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in Oslo and Madrid (after Christians) but only the third largest in Leicester and Leicestershire (after Christians and Hindus). Furthermore, within the Muslim community in Leicester, the dominant ethnic group is Indians, and not Pakistanis. However, our participants have been recruited from a mosque established by Muslims identifying with the Pakistani community in Leicester, and Pakistani Muslims form the largest community of Muslims in the UK.

3.3 Characteristics of Participants

Norway

Twenty women living in Oslo, Norway, consented to participating in our research.

Ten belonged to the ethnic majority (white) and 10 were ethnic minorities; below is the breakdown according to their religious affiliation:

Table 3.2 Religious and ethnic background of research participants in Norway

Religion	Ethnic Majority	Ethnic Minority
Lutheran	5	0
Evangelicals	5	0
Sunnis	0	5
Shias	0	5

The ages of Norwegian participants ranged from 20 to 73 years. Six of the participants were in their 20s, one in her 30s, three in their 40s, two in their 60s and four in their 70s. At the time of the interview, most of the women between 30 and 60 years of age were working, some full-time and some part-time, and these were mostly working in highly skilled occupations. The reasons mentioned by other participants for not being in full employment included retirement for the oldest age group and studying at university or college for the youngest age group. Some of the research participants had been stay-at-home mothers when their children were younger, but others had worked full-time, also with small children. About half of the participants were, or had been, married and had children. None of the women who participated in the study had been a member of or active in the women's movement in Norway.

Spain

Twenty women from Madrid volunteered to participate in the research. Ten belonged to the ethnic majority (white) and 10 were ethnic minorities; below is the breakdown according to their religious affiliation:

Table 3.3 Religious and ethnic background of research participants in Spain

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

None of the women from Spain who participated in this study were activists or had any association with the feminist movement. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to in their 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.

United Kingdom

A total of 20 women living in the East Midlands volunteered to participate in the study. Nine belonged to the ethnic majority (white), and 11 were from ethnic minority backgrounds. The breakdown according to their religious affiliation is as follows:

Table 3.4 Religious and ethnic background of research participants in the UK

Religion	Ethnic Majority	Ethnic Minority
Anglican	5	0
Evangelical	3	2
Sunnis	0	5
Shias	1	4

The ages of UK participants ranged from 29 to 65 years, with more than half of the participants in their 40s. At the time of the interview, less than half were in full-time employment, and these were working in highly skilled occupations. The reasons mentioned by other participants for not being in full employment included retirement, stay-at-home mothers, and part-time work due to child care demands. None of the women who participated in the study had been a member of or active in the women's movement in the UK.

3.4 Research ethics

Ethical approval for this research has been obtained from Loughborough University's Research Ethics Committee (for our research in Spain and the UK) and from the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (for our research in Norway). Research participants were given a general letter of information about the research, 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 would be kept confidential. In the Working Paper, interviewees are referred to in relation to their religious affiliation, either as Lutheran, Catholic or Anglican (majority-majority), Evangelical/Pentecostal (minority-majority), Sunni (majority-minority), or Shia (minority-minority) participant.

In writing up our research we have attempted to protect the anonymity of the research participants by not identifying anyone by their real names. We have tried to avoid linking direct quotes from individuals with the churches, congregations or mosques they come from. These organisations vary considerably in terms of their number of members, and some of them have a profile that makes them easier to recognise even though the individual respondents are not named. It is often difficult to contextualise the analysis when we aim to protect the respondents' anonymity, but such protection has been a priority throughout the presentation of our research findings.

3.5 In-depth interviews

The interviews have been based on a qualitative approach to research, where in-depth, personal interviews have been conducted with the aid of topic or interview guides. Such an approach offers the opportunity to focus on a limited number of cases whilst exploring topics and meaning in depth, resulting in the production of 'thick description' data (Geertz, 1973). Following Rubin and Rubin (2005: 30), we define our approach to interviewing within the tradition of interpretive constructionist thinking, in which 'responsive interviewing' (ibid.) entails the understanding that both the researcher and the interviewee come to the research situation with their own feelings, personality, interests, and experience. Moreover, a dynamic relationship is created in the interview situation which might challenge both the researcher and the interviewee in terms of his or her understanding, and the interview setting thus provides an arena for dialogue and conversation which aims at 'depth of understanding, rather than breadth' (ibid.). A strategy of engagement in the research interview, rather than disengagement and distance, is a valued aspect of feminist methodology and research, and emphasises connections between knowledge, theory and language, and experience (Ramazanoğlu, 2002; see also Kitzinger, 2007).

The UK interviews were conducted within the period of March - July 2009, the interviews in Norway were conducted in the period March – June 2009, and the interviews in Spain were conducted in the period March – August 2009.[73] All interviews were recorded, and they have been transcribed verbatim by professional transcription agencies or by research assistants in the three countries. Interviews were conducted in different settings – sometimes in the office or workplace of the interviewee, at our own workplace, in the context of the religious organisation in which the respondents are active, or at cafes or other public spaces.

Quite a few of the respondents had a busy schedule, and the recruitment process was much slower than expected. We used the snow-ball method to identify relevant groups and individual women within them. We used e-mails and made numerous

[73] Four interviews in Spain had to be repeated due to technical errors. These were conducted between February and April 2010.

phone-calls, and sent recruitment letters to recruit women. In some cases it was difficult to make contact with women, and even if they had said yes to participate in the project it could be difficult to arrange interview appointments. The recruitment process was time-consuming in all three countries.

Two sets of topic guides were developed and used for the two major different faiths, Christianity and Islam. The differences between the two topic guides were mainly in terms of terminology; the terms church, mosque, Christian and Muslim were interchanged where appropriate.[74]

The analysis has been based on an inductive approach and has thus been grounded in the data. A qualitative approach offers comparable data (across cases), but contrary to other research strategies this approach does not produce findings that can be generalised. Our findings are related to the specific organisational, social and cultural contexts that have been included in our study. However, our findings indicate issues and problems that are likely to be indicative of a broader set of organisations in which religious women are active, and of a broader set of religious women's perspectives on the issues of gender, religion, and citizenship.
In the analysis, the different types of research participants, Anglicans, Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Shia and Sunnis, are presented and represented through different 'voices' (Baklien and Solberg, 1997: 22). These voices are sometimes expressed through direct quotations from the interview transcripts, while at other times they are expressed through statements produced by the researchers; statements which summarise and interpret what the research participants have said (ibid.). Moreover, our own 'researchers' voices' are expressed through the evaluations and interpretations that are made by us on the basis of interviews and document-based data. While our aim is to keep as much distinction between these different voices as possible, we might not always have succeeded in achieving clear distinctions recognisable by our readers. Again, based on the view that research data are produced through interaction between the researcher and research participants (Kvale, 1997), we acknowledge that it is unrealistic to succinctly

[74] For the actual topic guides that were used, see appendices in the Working Papers from each individual country.

separate all the different voices that speak through the discourse produced in our study.

3.6 Insider/outsider problematic

Self reflection in qualitative research is common place for many social researchers today. Reflecting on the research process and the analysis of our data allows an insight into the researchers' perspectives or biases on the subjects studied and how they engaged with the experiences of the participants in both the interview and analysis stages.

Norway

Beatrice Halsaa and Hannah Helseth did the qualitative interviews in Norway, and Beatrice Halsaa and Cecilie Thun analysed the interview material. The interview team differed in terms of age; one is in her 30s and one in her 60s. Halsaa and Helseth often interviewed together, with Helseth as the main responsible person for doing the interviews, with Halsaa coming in with supplementary questions. The research team felt at ease with this procedure, and also felt, from time to time, that the age difference could be an advantage in terms of relating to the interviewees on the basis of similarity (or difference) of age.

The 'insider/outsider problematic' in this research project is a complex issue. None of the researchers in the Norwegian part of this study identify as 'religious' or belong to a religious community. However, all the researchers belong to the ethnic majority population in Norway and have attended the Norwegian public school system with teachings in Christianity, and are most familiar with the Christian majority religion (the Lutheran State Church). Being ethnic-majority Norwegians, we also shared that position with both the Christian groups in our study (the Church of Norway and the Pentecostals). The researchers have different practices regarding women's rights and feminist activities, but we are all self-defined feminists.

In the interview situation, the Christian women did not behave or talk as if they had a lot to explain or to defend, and we probably did not invite them to do so to the same extent as with the Muslim interviewees. We felt more 'alien' to the Pentecostal

women than to the majority Christian women, and had to ask about several facts of their tradition. Muslim women themselves often took the opportunity of the interview to outline and explain their practices, prescriptions and doctrines to us. We were taken to be representatives of the unknowing, critical majority population.

The researchers who did the interviews were clearly outsiders to the two Muslim groups, often without a similar national or ethnic belonging, often without skills in the main language of immigrant women, and being alien to their religious rituals and doctrines. We were warmly welcomed, however, and the women we met in the mosques were generally friendly, informative and seemed to regard our project with sincere interest. It was quite obvious that they also took this as an opportunity to correct potential misunderstandings of Islam; one was particularly prepared for this purpose and openly informed us about it. The Christian women likewise welcomed us warmly. We were treated more like insiders to the majority Christian women, who took our knowledge of certain names and practices for granted. This was slightly different with the Christian minority women who soon learned that we did not belong to their community. None of them displayed any sign of wanting to defend their faith or practices, but they willingly explained when we asked.

The feeling of being an 'insider' to the majority Christian women in the interview situation, may be because of a sense of belonging to the shared community of 'we Norwegians', implying a shared history, values and reference points based on a Christian heritage. These things are usually unsaid, but they may still be present in the interview situation, and provide a certain context for the interview.

Lastly in this section, it is worth noticing that we as researchers, as well as our respondents, are situated in a context of negative public attention towards Islam. This may be one reason why the Muslim interviewees felt the need to defend and to emphasise the positive aspects of their religion. This context may also have contributed to a stronger focus on religion as resource, rather than a barrier, in our analysis of the interview material.

Spain

A white female researcher of Spanish citizenship, Esther Quintero, conducted the fieldwork in Spain. 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. Quintero had no previous knowledge of Islam other than that of the average person - some Muslim friends and general knowledge. Her 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, she had more acquaintance with quantitative sociological approaches and methods. Line Nyhagen Predelli has provided intellectual support and advice for the Spanish study, as well as writing up parts of the Spanish case-study Working Paper.

United Kingdom

The fieldwork for the UK study was undertaken by Esmeranda Manful, a non-British citizen and an African female researcher. Manful is a self-confessed Christian, belonging to the Pentecostal faith tradition. She was socialised with a 'Christian ethos' as a child, and attended Anglican and Catholic secondary schools. Her only experience of Islam prior to the fieldwork is through reading and through interactions with Muslim friends. Furthermore, she has not been an activist in the women's movement. Her main research focus has hitherto been on children's rights, which, in some instances, advances the rights of women to ensure the development of children.

The second researcher for the UK study, Line Nyhagen Predelli, was born in Norway, and lives and works in the UK. She is ethnically white. She is not active in the women's movement, but identifies as a feminist academic. She was raised within the Lutheran State Church in Norway, but now holds secular beliefs. Much of her research has focused on issues regarding gender, religion, and citizenship, including a study of Norwegian Evangelical missionaries in nineteenth-century Madagascar (Nyhagen Predelli, 2003a), studies of Muslim immigrant women and men in Norway (Nyhagen Predelli, 2004 and 2008), and studies of women's movements in Norway, Spain and the UK (Nyhagen Predelli et al., 2008; Nyhagen Predelli et al., 2009).

In the interview context, the negotiation of boundaries between interviewer and participants was evident in relation to the interviewer's ethnicity and faith. In almost all the interviews, there was an initial telephone conversation to discuss time and venue, where participants could have detected the interviewer's ethnicity in her accent. It might not have influenced all participants, for instance the Pentecostals were more ethnically diverse than the Anglicans, however the Muslims might have associated more closely with her because all but one were of ethnic minority backgrounds. Nevertheless, the interviewer was a Christian, which some of the participants, both Christian and Muslim, enquired about before the start of their respective interviews. Whilst for the Christians she made them aware of her understanding of some of their principles, for the Muslims she assured them that she has some friends who are Muslims and that the interview material would be used for academic purposes only. Informing participants of the interviewer's religious beliefs was done to gain their confidence and also to assure them that the study was not being done under any covert means, which would have rendered the interview situation unethical. The interviewer's Christian faith makes her an insider to Christian communities, while the fact of being a religious believer also makes her share an important identity aspect with all of the interviewed women. The interviewer's ethnic minority status probably supported access to and recruitment of ethnic minority participants in the study. Holding a non-British passport, however, makes the interviewer an outsider in relation to citizenship rights and status within the UK context.

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 also useful 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 organisations. 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 organisations, 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 IDENTITY, MEANING AND RELIGION AS A FLEXIBLE RESOURCE

4.1 Introduction

Religion offers 'identities that matter to people' (Modood, 2007:79), and in this chapter we focus on the importance of religion in the everyday lives of Christian and Muslim women. The aim is to gain insight into the larger issues of religion, gender and citizenship. Religious doctrines have traditionally given backing to patriarchal institutions and practices, and we ask if and how religion can be used as a flexible resource to support more egalitarian interpretations and practices.

The first part of the chapter focuses on how Christian and Muslim women in Norway, Spain and the UK describe the meaning of religion and how it shapes their behaviour. Analytically, we have adopted Woodhead's dichotomous distinction between what religion '*does*' and what religion '*is*' (Woodhead, 2007). The second part is a discussion of the religious figures, men and women, that the interviewees admire, and the third part explores if and how religion is more or less a flexible or a fixed resource for improving the situation of women.

4.2 The meaning of religion in everyday life

In this section, we explore the interviewee's descriptions of who they are and of the importance of religion in their lives. The most striking findings, albeit not surprising, is the way religion – across the different groups of majority and minority Christian and Muslim women - permeates their everyday lives and give them a moral basis; the close connection between having a religious identity and being a good citizen; and the hybrid, plural and situated descriptions of identity, often due to the distinction made between religion as an institution, as a practice and as a belief.

There are a number of differences in the descriptions of the meaning of religion or faith between the individual research participants. These are related, for example, to variations in the depth of their religious pervasion, to the practical difficulties of 'doing faith', and to perceptions of prejudice. Differences are often, but not always, related

to faith groups and their position as majoritised or minoritised, and to the respondents' ethnicity and national belonging.

4.2.1 Personal identity and religion

We started the interviews, after having presented ourselves and the project, by asking the interviewees to describe themselves, who they are, and how important religion is in their lives. The opening questions were framed somewhat differently in the three countries, however, in UK, the researcher always carefully asked the respondents, 'How would you describe who you are – what is your identity?' before asking them 'How important is religion to your identity? And in your everyday life?'. The Norwegian researchers sometimes asked the interviewees to describe who they were in general terms before focusing on the meaning of religion, and sometimes asked only about their religious identity. In Spain, most interviewees found the question of personal identity too vague, and the researcher was sometimes prompted to bring up religion as one dimension of identity. In the course of the Spanish interviews, discussions that are relevant to identity in the broader sense came up during different questions, and therefore the focus is on the UK and Norway than on Spain in this section.

All participants, irrespective of how the questions were formulated, talked about their identities in plural, referring to family relations, age, education, professional life, culture, ethnicity, nationality and religion. Identities were also represented as situated, contextual and quite often also as discontinuous due to change of denomination or tradition. These findings are in line with contemporary scholarly approaches to identity that describes identity as hybrid and ongoing, contextual work. However, some interviewees, were reluctant to label themselves and to being labelled.

Four separate but overlapping themes were salient in the UK material: personal achievement; family relations; ethnicity/nationality/cultural background; and religion. The Norwegian and Spanish material is not always comparable to this because of the greater focus the researchers had on the interviewee's religious identity. However, like the UK women, the Norwegian and Spanish respondents also offered a lot of reflections regarding ethnicity/nationality/cultural background. The

Norwegian interviews are also complete with descriptions of family relations, and include discussions of problems related to the status of being 'single women' [enslig kvinne]. They often mentioned personal achievement such as education and career, as did women in the UK.

The different research questions, and the wide scope of responses, give evidence of identity as a very complex category. The various issues that were described in the interviews are discussed in the next section.

Personal achievement, career and independence

Some of the interviewees referred to personal achievements, and their independence, when they described who they are. One UK respondent said she had completed her basic qualifications 'in her home country [Pakistan]. I am a self-made person, and I have my career so I can say that I have done a lot through my life' (UK Min-min 3; Shia 3). After describing herself as permeated by faith, a Norwegian woman said:

> *'I am a person who is preoccupied with wondering, and understanding. And therefore I am quite open and curious, I think. In relation to this field. And I am a person who has been lucky to participate a lot in organisational life, and had the chance of being a leader quite a lot, and have seed that it is possible to influence. So, in a way, I have been lucky, having been able to contribute to my own and other people's situation too.'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 6; A 6)

This woman underlined her contributions as a leader, and her influence.

A woman from the UK described her identity by emphasising her individuality:

> *'I suppose I am a mature woman, I don't need anybody else to define me, I am me. I know a lot of women define themselves as being somebody's wife or somebody's mother. I don't do that. I am a Christian and I am English and a musician.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 4; Anglican 4)

She is herself. She does not belong to anybody else ('being somebody's wife'). Her identity is defined by her faith, ethnicity and profession.

One young Norwegian Muslim described her identity this way:

> *'I am a young lady [dame], and I work as a teacher. And I am from Pakistan. And I am a Muslim woman, religious Islam. And I can say that I enjoy myself [trives] very much in this country'.*
>
> (Norway min-maj 4; C4)

This woman illustrates identity in the plural: age, profession, ethnicity and faith are important. Like for other Norwegian women, professional life is important to her, but hardly more than other dimensions. The reference to enjoying being in Norway reflects her position as an immigrant ('I am from Pakistan'), and may be an effort to please the researchers, and/or to differentiate herself from the image of victimised immigrants.

4.2.2 Family relations

Most interviewees emphasised their family relations when they talked about themselves. They mentioned their identity(ies) as that of wife, housewife, mother, daughter – or that of being single.

Some of the UK respondents made references only to the context of the home when describing their identities:

> '*Who am I? I am a wife and a mum. I have three daughters. None of them are permanently at home. I am also a daughter, my mum lives relatively near. I see her fairly often.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 5; Pentecostal 5)

This woman refers to her role as wife, mother and daughter, and does not mention activities outside the home, unlike one white English Shia who described herself this way:

> *'I have been married for 28 years, seven kids, full-time housewife, mother and I have a degree. I have a teaching qualification, […] I don't do paid work. […] I have been involved in some programmes of going in to schools and teaching if the teachers have needed help with explaining Islamic customs and traditions to the children. That is basically it for me, mum.'*
>
> (UK min_min 4; Shia 4)

Her identity is more complex than the previous. She refers to education and some involvement in schools and teaching ('explaining Islamic customs'), but despite her degree she is a 'full-time housewife' with seven kids.

In general, the Norwegian respondents did not forefront their family relations when describing their identity. This is probably related to the fact that all of them are or have been in paid work unless they are students. Their family relations came up during the interviews, however, but only after a while and as one of several identity issues.

Some of the Norwegian majority women pointed to family relations in the sense of being single. One woman described herself as free and respected as a single woman:

> *'Throughout the years I have in a way, I am not dependent on any man for my life to function, although I am brought up to it. […] In my life I feel very free. And very respected, as a single woman. But at the same time I experience that some things are against, for example amongst typical family folks, that they look at me in a funny way, particularly in Christian circles.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 1; A1)

The status of being 'single' [enslig] is not unproblematic, according to this woman. Religious communities are quite family-oriented, and being single deviates from the norm.

4.2.3 Ethnicity, nationality and culture

Both ethnic majority and minority women from Norway, Spain and the UK included ethnicity when they talked about their personal identity. In the UK, women from ethnic minorities highlighted ethnicity and cultural heritage more than majority women. Ethnic minority Muslim women in Spain, apart from those of Moroccan origin, – in contrast to almost all other women interviewed – described their identity in terms of their country of origin, and also always mentioned this aspect of their identity early in the interviews. Other Sunnis either did not mention where they or their family were from, or the issue came up very late during the interview. In Norway, ethnicity/nationality was expressed through 'I am' in terms of decent or origin, or in terms of a more circumstantial subjective ethnic identification that could

be plural. Ethnicity/nationality was always present among the Sunnis and Shias in Norway, and sometimes also among the Lutheran and Pentecostal women.

Here are some examples of how minority women described their personal identity:

> *'I would describe myself as an Iranian English woman living in England. It is a very difficult question'.*
>
> (UK min_min 6; Shia 6)

> *'Who am I? I am a Caribbean heritage woman, a Black British woman who is a Christian, working and living my life in Britain.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 4; Pentecostal 4)

Identity is described as a difficult and existential issue by these two interviewees who combine religion and national identity when they describe themselves.

A Norwegian respondent likewise found it difficult to describe her identity. She described the various countries and cities where she had lived, and said:

> *'So, it is difficult, really, to tell my identity. I feel I have a bit of this and that, I am both Norwegian, and, I almost said Arabic. I won't say Iraqi so much, because I have not, well I lived there until I was [a teenager], but I grew up in X [country], so I had all kind of things from Arabic cultures, I did not use to be very religious, it started when I was maybe 19.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 1; D1)

Like the previous respondents, this woman describes a hybrid identity, combining nationality/ethnicity and religion, being Norwegian, Arabic and a Muslim. So does the next respondent:

> *'A British Muslim. Although my parents are from Pakistan, my father was actually born here, my mother is from Pakistan, and I relate myself more to Britain and being a Muslim than being from Pakistan. Some of my friends from a similar age say British Pakistani Muslim or Pakistani Muslim, but I regard myself as British.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 5; Sunni 5)

Once more, we see a hybrid identity where cultural background is combined with religious, national and racial/ethnic identities. This woman described a mix of Pakistani and British heritage and a Muslim religious identity.

Norwegian minority women always described a combination of national background, citizenship and religious identity, such as this respondent:

> *'My name is […] and I am initially from Pakistan, but now I am a Norwegian citizen. And I am a Muslim.'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 3; C3)

This woman's hybrid identity is typical of ethnic minority women, but the order of referring to nationality/ethnicity and faith differ, and only some refer to citizenship.

Most of the Spanish minority women also described their identity in terms of their country of origin – in contrast to almost all the other women from Spain. Country of origin was one of the aspects that came first in the interviews:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; Min_min 5)

This quote illustrates how religious adherence and nationality/citizenship are dynamic and situational. This participant explains that in Spain she is one thing, and when she travels she is something else. Her wording suggests that in choosing her identity marker (e.g., Spanish, Lebanese, Argentinean) she considers her context and uses the descriptor that she thinks fits best. It seems that she picks whatever other individuals may find more appropriate. 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 it 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' (Spain maj_min 4; Min_maj 04). So perhaps for a devout Sunni Muslim, nationality is not as important and religious adherence makes up for nationality as an identifier.

Some ethnic majority women in the UK and Norway also identified with their heritage, but much less often and with less emphasis compared to the ethnic minority women. In Norway, one finding is that women with a missionary background tended to emphasise their mixed cultural background:

> '*I grew up in the Pentecostal movement. I am a missionary child, from the outset. Grew up in Africa, and was there until I was 12, and well, started to walk barefoot in the village, in the bush. I have kind of a bi-cultural background, you may say, because I almost felt like an African when I came to Norway, 12 years of age. And now, I have lived a Norwegian life. I have also been to boarding school, as a child, yes. So I have kind of a bi-cultural background, in addition to attending a small Norwegian school, in the bush, in XX. Yes.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 1; B1)

This woman describes how she 'felt like an African when she came to Norway'. Like other women with a missionary background in the data material, she emphasises her childhood abroad, and then describes a 'kind of a bi-cultural background'. This background is often represented as an advantage with respect to addressing the contemporary multicultural society.

4.2.4 Age and personal characteristics

Not all the women emphasised their personal achievement, family relations, or ethnicity/nationality. Some of the Norwegian women described their personal identity in terms of their personality, such as 'What can I say, I don't know. I am a rather patient person, really.' (Nor Min_maj; 5). One woman said:

> '*I am a woman in my best age. I am, as a character [som type], I am more introverted than extroverted. I like being with people, but simultaneously, in this one room where I am not together with a lot of people, I like that life.'*
>
> (Nor maj_maj 3; A 3)

This woman did not want to tell her exact age, in contrast to some of the young respondents who actually began their description of who they are in terms of age.

The expression ‘my best age’ could be ironic. It could also be a way of claiming that she was fine, despite her age. Otherwise, she focuses on the complex relations between being more introvert than extrovert. This issue is addressed by several Norwegian women, like the next one:

> ‘*I believe I am a rather, a person who is engaged in other people, and who likes to interact with others. Tranquil [stille], as well.’*
>
> (Nor maj_maj 4; A4)

This respondent emphasises her interest in other people, in line with many Norwegian women in this research. She also presents herself as tranquil.

4.2.5 Against being labelled

Several UK respondents were reluctant to associate themselves with particular identity characteristics:

> ‘*Me, I am just your average working mum. The fact that I am Muslim and am Asian […], that is personal to me, but I just consider myself as a normal, everyday citizen. I go to work, pay my taxes, do everything that everybody else does. So […], I don’t like labels. Yes I don’t like labels. I don’t like people pigeon holing you and saying, you are this and this you know. I try to be a decent human being and that is what I am, or that is what I strive to be.’*
>
> (UK min_maj 4; Sunni 4)

This respondent is emphasising commonalities with other ‘British citizens’ rather than her difference from the majority as Muslim and Asian. She does not want to be ‘the other’, a minority. Her dislike of being labelled was probably directed at her national status as a citizen in the UK, where she is a minority both in terms of her religion and her ethnicity.

Another woman in the UK sample who, like the previous, disliked being labelled, could not identify herself with just one distinct category:

> *‘OK, well I don’t tend to think of myself particularly with labels, I suppose that Christianity is important to me, so I would probably describe myself as a Christian. I am not sure if I would particularly describe myself as single, although I am, because to me that is not important. I would probably describe myself as a quantitative researcher, […]. I also might describe myself in terms of being creative or artistic, and liking artistic hobbies. I am kind of practical, […] I suppose that is how I see myself I guess.’*
>
> (UK maj_maj 6; Anglican 6)

Her response illustrates the trouble of describing one's identity when it is hybrid, contextual and constantly reworked. Dislike of labelling is not only attributed to the wish not to be 'the other', but also to the impossibility of fitting into one overall identity category.

4.2.6 Summary

This section has demonstrated that women's identity is multilayered and contextual. Few respondents, if any, described themselves as fitting into only one category. The responses from the UK women, who were systematically asked about their personal identity before religion was mentioned by the researcher, fell broadly into four themes: personal achievements; family relations; ethnicity/nationality; and religion. The responses from Spain demonstrate that nationality and cultural heritage were more important than other aspects of identity, in particular for many of the Muslim women. The importance of family relations, broadly speaking, was important among the Norwegian respondents but never stood out as 'the' identity issue. Muslim women in Norway focused on nationality/ethnicity/cultural background, as did Muslim women in Spain and the UK. Some of the white majoritised women, in Norway and UK, also addressed these issues. Although all respondents are religious, the focus of their identities varied.

4.3 The importance of religion

Religion obviously plays an important role in the everyday lives of our research participants. We have already observed that 'religion' was one of the four main topics mentioned by the UK women when they described who they are. Similarly, it was a core issue for the Norwegian and Spanish women, irrespective of how the question of identity was framed. All research participants were aware that they had been selected on the bases of their religious adherence, but the researchers' immediate focus on religious identity in the conversations with Norwegian and Spanish interviewees may have caused a certain respondent bias; a greater emphasis on religious aspects of identity.

In contrast to the respondents across all faith groups in Norway, who gave detailed descriptions of the meaning of religion in their everyday lives, this was not so in Spain. Generally speaking, Sunni and Pentecostal participants in Spain appeared more eager to describe their religious identity in detail, than Shia and Catholic women.

Nevertheless, the function of religion as a meaning-maker came out as a striking similarity across nations and denominations. What religion *does*, according to our interviewees - in line with established research - is to create meaning and to shape moral codes and actual behaviour in everyday life, and to encourage active participation in the community. The function of religion is different from what religion *is,* but the distinction between the content of religion and the function of religion is analytical, based on Woodhead (2007), and does not arise directly from our interviewees. Nevertheless, when we asked our respondents to tell us about the meaning of religion in their everyday lives, they not only took the functional approach, but also shared their thoughts about the content of their faith, what their religion *is.*

The significance of religion in the everyday life of the respondents came across very clearly in the interviews as something that united the women across different faith, nationality, etc. Still, there are complex nuances in their representations of what religion *is,* the content of their faith. Among the issues that came up in the interviews was a differentiation between religion as an institution, as practice and as faith. Some women expressed a dislike of being labelled as religious. Other issues that came up were continuity or discontinuity in religious identity and belonging, religion as taken for granted or actively chosen, religion as interwoven into or connected to personal identity. These issues are, as we shall see, related to differences in personal biographies, majority/minority status of ethnic or religious belonging, and to characteristics of their specific women's group.

We start this section with a discussion of the dislike of being labelled as religious, then move on to the overall 'meaning-making' function of religion, and end with a section on different descriptions of what religion *is*.

4.3.1 Rejecting the label 'religion'

Although religion was obviously very important in the lives of the research participants, some of the UK women were uncomfortable with the term 'religion'. They preferred to distinguish between religion as a 'belief system' and their own personal faith. One Anglican participant tried to distinguish between the belief system and her own religious faith and practice by stating:

> *'Religion no, faith yes. There is a difference. The religion is the concept of the overall thing that there is a god [...]. The faith is how you live that in that religion, in that journey. And I think religion is taught to children OK, you can't teach someone faith when they are little, it is something you learn as you grow, and I think through experience as much as anything. […] But faith as opposed to religion I think.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 5; Anglican 5)

This woman had in mind that religion is a rather abstract concept, contrary to faith, which describes her own belief and practices. Her comments allude to the distinction between what religion 'is' (a belief in God), religious practices ('how you live in that religion'), and the meaning the distinction provides in everyday life (you can teach religion to children, but you 'can't teach someone faith').

She stated:

> *'I think we have to clarify our definition of religion. I don't call myself religious, I consider myself biblical. I think religion is a blight on society, I think it is a blight on the church. I think religion is organised human ways of dominating people, of keeping people under. So I don't consider myself religious. I do consider myself biblical, yes.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 4; Pentecostal 4)

This participant also makes a distinction between the broad concept of religion and a specific faith. Religion, in her opinion, can be used as a tool to oppress people but she would like to identify instead with what religion *is*, faith in the Bible. She seems to be disassociating herself from the general concept of religion, and preferring instead to be identified with biblical beliefs.

One Shia woman, who has chosen not to wear the headscarf, also found it problematic to identify and present herself primarily as a religious person, as she perceived the word to be restrictive. She explained:

> *'It affects me but I don't introduce myself through my religion, I am free of that name. If they ask me I am a Muslim, but I am free, I don't, I am a Muslim I was brought up in a Muslim family and I believe in, I read the Qur'an [and] I believe in it. It is difficult.'*
>
> (UK min_min 6; Shia 6)

Her expression of 'I am free' could suggests two things; On the one hand, it could be that she finds Islam to be practised in ways that are inconsistent with the Qur'an as revealing the word of the Prophet. On the other hand, it could be that people easily put her into the category 'Muslim woman', with all the constraints and limitations this category produces in cultural and social terms, rather than seeing her first and foremost as an individual, with a multitude of interests.

There is no mentioning of explicit rejections of being labelled as religious in the Spanish and Norwegian data material. The actual choice of words by some women, however, implicitly point in the same direction. They systematically used 'faith' instead of 'religion', spirituality [åndelighet] instead of religiosity, and labelled themselves as 'believers' [troende] and not as 'religious'.

Although all the interviewees adhered to a religious belief, we have seen that some did not want their adherence to be expressed as 'religious' or 'religion', suggesting that the word has negative connotations. They preferred to be identified with (their specific) faith, indicating a focus on their personal faith/practice instead of considering religion as a total belief system. Religion seems to be perceived as canons and doctrines, with religious institutions and with how religion has been interpreted by followers, rather than with how the women themselves personally interpret and practice it. This raises the question of whether we can or should differentiate faith from religion and belief. 'Belief' refers to believing in God as well as to not believing in God, whereas 'faith' refers to religious faith. The notion of 'faith' refers to something personal, but it cannot be completely separated from faith being part of a common shared (religious) belief within a group of people. The term 'religion' connotes systems and doctrines more than (personal) 'faith', and has

historically been used as a tool of oppression and discrimination, either from within religious traditions themselves, or by external forces (such as the state).

4.4 What religion *does* – provider of meaning and moral values

In this section, we present the interviewees' elaborations of what religion *does.* Our findings support the claim that religion provides a feeling of identity and belonging, and is intimately bound up with who the respondents 'really' are (Greil and Davidman, 2007: 549).

According to our respondents, religion is important in a number of ways. Foremost and across the different categories, religion is claimed to be the 'foothold' and 'foundation' in the lives of the respondents. Faith gives direction at difficult crossroads and in all aspects of life, to paraphrase several interviewees. Faith offers an 'ethical standard', something to 'aspire' to, and provides coherence, in otherwise 'compartmentalised lives'. Most of the interviewees gave vivid descriptions of how religion was a fundamental part of their identity. This was irrespective of their belonging to majority or minority religions, denomination and ethnicity. This is a clear finding in the Norwegian material, whilst it was not as prominent in the findings from Spain and the UK. Some of the Catholics in Spain deviated from the pattern of extensive descriptions because they seemed to take their religious identity for granted. Because of the differences, the results are presented country-wise in the sections below.

4.4.1 Norway: Foothold and foundation

The Norwegian researchers were struck by the profundity of the descriptions of the meaning of religion, and the ease with which the interviewees' shared their reflections. The following citations illustrate this point:

> *'The faith is the foundation [bærebjelke] in my life, a foothold or foundation in life that shifts wind and weather and road conditions … is the essence, that holds me firmly, that is there, in a way. […] It is the most basic, actually, that I am created and willed by God.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

'It invites me to be creative in the bright and dark moments of life. … We all live, in various ways and various fields, in relation to our personality, then. And so this gives me a foundation also in death and pain. That is not the last there is, because there is something, there is hope – in the middle of darkness there is hope. Out of ashes flowers grow.'

(Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

'[I am] very proud of being a Muslim, I believe it is important for me to live according to, it guides me and encourages me, in society, at home in relation to individual persons, how to bring up my children, help others, care, and show understanding for those who are different from me. … My whole life is governed by religion.'

(Norway min_maj 3; C3)

'Religion means everything … it seems to be a dangerous word, right. To be subjected to, and to follow prescriptions, like brainwashing and stuff- but I regard it completely different, like a system. That tells me how to love, how to improve my living, and so on. Manners and stuff. I don't just look at the mandatory things one really should do, like pray, fast etcetera, because that sounds very tiresome. For me, it is my system of laws [lovverk]'.

(Norway min_min; D1)

'Religion is really my value foundation, my whole life, the most important in life … to put it simply, it is the basic values that make up the foundation for all my decisions, and everything, all the choices I make… Of course, one fails every now and then, but it is what is there, the basis … for example for how I spend my time. I am conscious of what I use my time for, lots of time in the congregation, with my family and alone. For tasks that are mine alone. And of course, like ethical and moral issue have a great say, like choices I make regarding ethics and moral are based upon what I believe in … and the way I bring up my children, and obviously I try to be honest in all situations, and in working life.'

(Norway maj_min 2; B2)

'Religion permeates most of what I am doing, I am concerned about wondering, understanding …. Less concerned with right and wrong and dogmatic principles, but very concerned about this. This rather mystical, incomprehensible, that after all gives me a direction in life. It permeates with respect to work, attitudes to things that other people might not think are related to religion.'

(Norway maj_maj 6; A6)

'Religion is something you live, that you have in yourself all the time. It is not something you bring out at certain times. It is, I say, there all the time. [B5] It is something one has inside which is always there. Something, it is not something you put away and stuff. No.'

(Norway maj_min 5; B5)

In various ways, all the citations above document the core role of religion in the descriptions by the Norwegian respondents. They give rich evidence to established

claims of what religion can *do* for people, or how religion can *function* as a provider of meaning in genuine and profound ways.

Religious identity also structures daily life and practices. This is most prominent among those who have a habit – prescribed or not – of saying prayers regularly, and of prioritising their inner life. Spiritual guidance is of no use if you don't set aside time each day for yourself, one of the interviewees explained. It is necessary to have 'time for quietness, for stillness and the company of God, to get in contact with this outside of yourself', she said (Norway maj_maj 6; A6). Religious practices are time consuming, and influence life in the short run as well as in the long run.
An extended time perspective on life that includes death was often mentioned by Muslim women in Norway. They often referred to life after death and to the potential reward or punishment expected on the Day of Judgement.

Religion is described by our respondents, displayed above, as a value foundation [bærebjelke], a permeating issue. It is therefore something that you always actively 'live' [lever]. Obviously, religion is a key dimension in these women's lives in Norway.

4.4.2 UK: Moral foundation and a way of life

Many of the interviewees in the UK also emphasise the meaning of religion as a moral foundation and a defining issue and confirmed this aspect of religion in their daily lives. Their faith serves as the basis of their moral codes. The Christian faith was described by one Pentecostal as the source of her values. She said:

> *'My faith in Jesus Christ defines exactly everything about who I am. He gives me my value system, so that if anyone says anything negative to me, I might not like it very much but it doesn't change who I am, it doesn't define who I am. God alone gives me my value. So everything that I do comes out of the love that God has put into me, and the security and wholeness that I have, all that I do comes out from that, it is a natural out working of that.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 2; Pentecostal 2)

This interviewee views her personal relationship with God as the most important relationship and source of values in her everyday life. Similarly, a Shia participant also stated that her faith structures and defines her everyday life, she said:

'Oh very, oh yes, because it is something that doesn't leave you from when you wake up to when you go to sleep. I mean, it is part of who you are and how you behave and how you go about your daily actions and what you want to achieve in your day you know. It is a constant. But everything in our life is sort of like, we have got no doubts about how we are going to go about our daily life, or problems that arise. If we do have a doubt or something we need to ask. But most of the time we know what we are supposed to be doing and you know in a way it is sort of like, all the answers are there for us. So yes I would say very important and very natural. […] I like my life, it is very ordered, you wake up you know what time your prayers you know, I don't know I just find prayer time, it organises your day […]'

(UK min_min 4; Shia 4)

Her personal faith structures and guides her daily life; she presents her faith as a fundamental part of who she is. This notion was not unique to the Islamic faith, as an Anglican woman also stated:

'I suppose it is fairly quite important, because it is something that I do. […] I start the day by doing Bible readings and what have you. It is part of my life, certainly, it has always been part of my life.'

(UK maj_maj 4; Anglican 4)

Adhering to Christian principles on a daily basis is thus an integrated part of her identity. Likewise, a Sunni participant emphasised that Islam is part of her identity and her everyday life:

'Extremely […], I have realised that my religion is part of my life, it is not a religion where it has different components. Islam is a way of life really, and I don't see any reason why I can't mix my religion or my identity, but yes, my religion is extremely important because it helps me to be who I am today.'

(UK min_maj 5; Sunni 5)

This interviewee also re-echoes previous comments about how religion serves as the basis of the participants' moral code.

4.4.3 Spain: More or less taken for granted

Among the Spanish respondents, whilst religion is said to play a core role in the lives of most of them, there seems to be more variation in how religion is felt and expressed than among respondents in Norway and the UK. This is partly because some Catholic women appeared to take their religious identity for granted and had not reflected much about the meaning of being Catholic. Also, Pentecostal participants sometimes discussed their religious identity in opposition to the dominant Catholic religion and described their faith as a more personal religious experience largely based on

establishing a close relationship with God. The Evangelical aspects of Pentecostal belief are 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 2; 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 2; Min_Maj_02)

In a social context that is complex and diverse, and where women may have partners from different ethnic and religious groups, faith and religion are used as a resource 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 […]'.*
>
> (Spain min_maj 3; Maj_Min_03)

Both Sunni and Pentecostal 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, in contrast to this Sunni respondent who said:

> *'My religion is my life. If I am not a Muslim woman I am nobody.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

For Pentecostal women, religion is more about God than about institutions. The personal dimension is the most important. Thus, the term religion seems to equal institutionalised religion, and not 'free' religion or personal faith (see discussion of the terms in the summary of the previous section), as described by these women:

> *'Well, to me religion is not the key, God is. God is something personal. He's always been the central point of my life.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 1; 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 […]'.*
>
> (Spain maj_min 5; 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 …'.*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

The descriptions of the meaning of religion display somewhat more variation among the respondents in Spain compared to Norway and the UK. One finding is that religion seems to be 'connected' to the Catholic self, while 'penetrating' or being 'intertwined' in the lives of Pentecostal and Sunni women.

4.4.4 Community, company and citizenship

When the interviewees were asked to reflect about the meaning of religion in their lives, most of the Norwegian and UK women, and some from Spain and the UK, underlined faith as a provider of 'community', 'company' and 'belonging'. The references to belonging among the interviewees extend the concept of citizenship beyond aspects of rights and duties. Citizenship as community, participation and belonging implies a broader approach to citizenship and a potentially more prominent role for religion (see also Chapters 2 and 5 of this Working Paper).

The respondents' descriptions of belonging and community confirm that religion functions as a social glue of great significance. They also correspond with the claims that religious groups represent significant sites for inclusion and participation.

When the interviewees talk about community and belonging, it is interesting to note that they do not restrict their discussions to local and national communities. This is in line with Permoser and Rosenbergers' (2009) concept of 'religious citizenship'. They see the increasing number of rights derived from religious membership as amounting to a form of 'religious citizenship'. This citizenship transcends nationality, they claim, and therefore increases the rights of Muslim immigrants (ibid. 3). However, this is evident not just among the Muslims who have a migrant background, but also among Christian women with or without a missionary background.

When the respondents refer to transnational belongings, they indicate how religious communities rupture national borders as the frame of identity:

> *'Wherever you travel in the world, you can go into a church and be a part of a community. Without having to go around in a town, or a country, there is always a connection/context [sammenheng] for you. Now, I don't know what it is like to live without being part of a congregation, because I always have, but for me, belonging to a congregation or a Christian community, in particular in times of crisis, I have experienced that it is in no way indifferent. There are people who care, almost like being part of a family of brothers and sisters.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

> *'And I think that belonging to a Church that is something bigger than me – also in a worldwide context – was very important for me earlier. But also now, that I get to be part of this is a very important part of my belonging, my sense of belonging as a citizen [medborger] in the society where I am now.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 4; A4)

These citations are strong reminders of how religion functions to provide identity. Feeling at home is basic, but 'home' is also a complex concept. Home means belonging and roots, but may also imply social control and loyalties that inhibits autonomy. Whether 'home' and belonging is positive or negative for the individual depends on the context, such as being positioned as belonging to a majoritised or minoritised faith community (Leirvik, 2002; Roald, 2005). One of the Muslim interviewees in Norway told us about of her grown up daughters who was

emotionally distraught because of all the negative focus on Islam in mass media. The interviewee managed to change her daughter's distraught when she mobilised support from her other daughters. Together, they addressed the strengths of Islam, and why they could be proud of themselves as Muslims:

> *'And then she (the daughter) improved a bit. Because she was totally alone at work, and there was always questions (about Islam) addressed to her. She was alone, but she did not know how to respond, you see? Consequently, it is very important to understand who one is. One should never hide away one's identity, identity is very important for a human being.'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 2; C2)

This citation illustrates the importance of community and of being confident. Support from a faith community can be crucial to restore self confidence and a sense of pride. Alone, her daughter could not cope with the questioning of her faith, but the community (her family) reached out and restored the damage done to her self-respect.

Another interviewee gave a clear-cut representation of religion as a vital source of strength and empowerment. Reading the Bible made her feel strong. She read the holy texts every day, and thus managed to 'face the day, and to meet other people' (Norway maj_min 1; B1).

Religion provides safety, care and hope for many respondents. There were several statements referring to the conviction that we are born in order to cooperate, and to help one another. We should all strive to display empathy and care for each other, the interviewees underlined, irrespective of religious belonging. One of the women explained it in this way:

> *'Let's say I have a Norwegian neighbour, and if I see that they have problems I'll go and help them. It doesn't matter to me, I see him and her as human beings, I don't see him or her as a Muslim or Christian. Well, religion is ok, but as long as you respect, respect is the very highest, very highest in a community, and in the whole world.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 2; D2)

Another woman described her belief that God was 'the creator of all human beings', including of herself, and how fundamental that is for her identity. To be created by

God, and to be not only responsible to God, but also to be loved by God is 'a very, like a positive foundation' she said (Norway maj_maj 5; A5).

Religion was also mentioned by many of the UK interviewees as the basis for the motivation to participate in their communities. One Sunni participant related her faith to that of being a good citizen:

> *'It is yes, it is very important to my identity. I think if you are a good law abiding [person] in religion as well, that makes you a good law abiding citizen as well. Because all the religions teach us the right things and they always say don't do the wrong things, so if you are abiding by your religion, which is obviously you are a good citizen as well. That is how I treat my religion.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 1; Sunni 1)

This interviewee suggests that abiding to her religion will ensure that she does not break the laws of the state; thus if all citizens were to believe and abide by their faiths, society would be devoid of social problems. Another interviewee suggested a more hands-on approach, she explained that:

> *'I feel the way to help impart that or get the message of Christ across is to be involved with the people who are in church. I may not see them, many of them I don't see outside of Church, but in my interactions with them, I hope they have opportunities to share how my life as a Christian impacts not just when I am in church, but when I am at work and with my family.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 4; Pentecostal 4)

The interviewee thus made a link between participating in the community and sharing her faith with others.

In Spain, Sunni women were very aware that practicing Islam means behaving in a certain way toward others. In this sense their religiosity is very much 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 in Spain, religion is an inescapable element of the social context, but it is also used as a resource for participating in society, and as something that facilitates or leads to companionship. It is 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.'

(Spain maj_maj 1; Maj_Maj_01)

Sunni women relate a markedly different experience. In addition to experiencing the minority status of their religion, they are also aware of 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.

The case of Shia Muslims in Spain is also interesting because, unlike Sunni Muslims, they do not seem to have a community of reference or an institutional 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.'

(Spain min_min 2; Min_Min_02)

Shias in Spain are positioned differently than Sunnis in more respects than having to cope without a room of their own. We will return to this issue later in this chapter.

4.4.5 A symbolic room: peace, quietness and confidence

For many women, God is intertwined in their everyday life as one who cares about them in a very literal sense, and who makes them see themselves as important. God is not a withdrawn figure, but actually 'here', a figure with whom one can be in contact, for instance when praying.

In line with this, faith was sometimes described as a source of peace, tranquillity and quietness across all four religious groups. Here is a Muslim woman:

'The five columns, frames around spiritual life, are what should be read, the prayers. Five times a day. I do it because it gives me strength, and it cleanses the heart and controls the passions and the temptations. … When I come from this (prayers) room, if something has happened and I am on fire, then I just forget and I calm down a little and I have peace and quiet. Many people say; you are so calm. And this is why I fast, it has taught me to practice love.'

(Norway min_maj 4; C4)

The citation displays that being loyal to Islamic prescriptions ('the five columns') are compatible with having personal religious experiences in line with those described by Christian women. The internal and external aspects of faith seem to melt together, according to this Sunni in Norway.

4.5 What religion '*is*' – the content of religion

When the respondents were asked to describe what religion meant to them, some of them also talked about the content of their faith. In this section we discuss the most prominent issues that were addressed regarding this dimension of religion: the relationship between institutions and practices; prescriptions and personal relations; culture and religion; tradition and choice (being or becoming religious); and prejudice.

4.5.1 Institutions and practices, prescriptions and personal relations

Muslim women from both majority and minority groups often referred to the obligatory prescriptions of Islam. Lutheran women and Norway and Pentecostal women hardly mentioned such issues, but rather emphasised religion as a personal relation to God, and religion as a dialogue between themselves and God. This does not, however, mean that a focus on prescriptions necessarily excludes personal relations.

Muslims interviewed in Norway and the UK were inclined to talk about religious prescriptions regarding behaviours when they outlined the meaning of religion in their lives. Many Norwegian respondents described Islam's five pillars or duties: several interviewees elaborated the duty of *Salah*, the ritual prayer which must be performed five times a day (three times for Shia's); the *Sawm*, or duty to fast during the month of Ramadan; the *Zakat*, or duty to give alms (Norway min_maj 5; C5); and the *Hajj*, the duty to do the pilgrimage to Mecca. There were also a number of comments related to Muslim dress code, like in Spain and the UK, or the obligation to dress decently (Norway min_min 1 and 2; D1, D2); to satisfy your husband in marriage (Norway min_min 1; D1), the duty to convert others (Norway min_maj 5; C5), etc.

Some phrases expressed by Muslim women were never used by Christian interviewees. References to God-given 'prescriptions' or 'recipes given by God' and the emphasis that 'the Creator knows best' (Norway min_min 1; C1) belong to a Muslim discourse, at least in our material. This illustrates that Muslim women tended to elaborate on different issues than Christian women, and more often referred to religious doctrines and prescriptions:

> *'The point is that when you talk about responsibility it is with respect to what you will be asked, what God will ask you about regarding your situation. God has distributed the answers, because on the Day of Judgement, which we believe in, God will ask in relation to the questions you got, and if the answers were not defined it would be difficult if God should ask you. You believe in a life after death. And this is where it is difficult, I believe, because people, people question why it is this and that, and maybe they have not understood the totality, why one should take the responsibility. Yes, because you believe in a life after death, and you have got duties and you have to reply on Day of Judgement.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 1; C1)

> *'The Qur'an is the guide, to put it that way. You find out about it, your whole life, right. So everyone tries to follow it. As well as what we find in Sunnah[75].'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 5; C5)

> *'Obviously, when one becomes religious there are automatically limitations, rights. One cannot attend parties, well you may attend but you are not to drink, right. And then, well, what's the point, right? … Because, suddenly [you have to explain] "I cannot shake hands with you", and so there are lots of limitations … And then there are restrictions concerning swimming.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 1; D1)

These citations illustrate the habit of referring to duties, restrictions in everyday life, and also to the Day of Judgement as a fundamental event. We believe that the strong focus on these issues by Muslim women in Norway, as well as in the UK and Spain, is partly related to a wish to inform the researchers, who openly admitted their ignorance regarding Islam. In addition, we suppose the eagerness to explain Islam is related to Islam's position as a minority religion, and a stigmatised one (Leirvik, 2002; Roald, 2005).

[75] The 'normative' example of Muhammad's life is called the *Sunnah* (literally 'trodden path').

Unlike Muslim women, Christian women from both denominations seldom referred to religious prescriptions. Instead, they strongly emphasised religion as a personal and relational phenomenon:

> *'I have a personal God-relation, I approach God as a relation in my life, an important relation […] And then it is also about the role of God [Gudsrollen] being so real and important, so, we, we, we take it as a completely realistic thing, this me and God, this is what it is about, then, to work on this relation. And I felt that I needed it, because I felt there was a distance between me and God. That I talk to a fellow human, you for instance, in a completely different way than I talk to God.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 1; A1)

This woman talks about the personal God-relation as realistic and basic ('an important relation', 'completely realistic', 'I talk to a fellow human'). Such descriptions were most noticeable among Christian women from the Lutheran group in Norway, which is not surprising if we consider that the specific character and aim of their women's group is to strengthen their personal bond to God.

There are, however, exceptions from the focus of Muslim respondents on doctrines, and the focus of Christian respondents on personal relations and dialogue.

For instance, one of the Muslim respondents claimed that although Islam had prescriptions, and 'some even important' (prescriptions), she herself was not dependent on them.

> *'The most important thing for me is to have peace, so if I find peace in faith, I follow [the rules], if not, I don't.'*
>
> *'I am satisfied with what I follow from religion. Because I mostly follow what my heart says, I have to say.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 5; D5)

This woman illustrates that prescriptions can be dealt with in flexible ways ('I most follows what my heart says').

Some of the Christian research participants, like many Norwegian Pentecostals, explained how their faith and practices had been formed by strict religious rules of conduct. These descriptions were, however, stories about the past, as illustrations of how it 'used to be' in their congregation:

> *'Obviously, growing up a Christian means a lot of restrictions regarding what you do and don't ... I have grown up with lots of those sacrifices, we could not go to the cinema, not to the theatre, could not dance.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 3; B3)

Religious restrictions are obviously not reserved for Muslim communities, as we just noticed, some Christian women presented the restrictions as a thing of the past, thus signalising improved conditions and modernity. One Christian woman described the regulations as part of the 'culture' of their faith community, and not of the faith itself. This is similar to the Muslim women who made a distinction between liberal religious doctrines and restrictive cultural practices and social control within their communities. It differs from the Muslim women who refer to sacred texts and traditions in order to justify Muslim practices.

As life goes on, some women take a more relaxed position. The next citation displays a faith free of nitty gritty prescriptions:

> *'And then life has on many occasions taught me that the longer I live, the more Christianity means for me, and the simpler it gets. So, my theology becomes simpler [enklere] all the time. I relate to Jesus every day. And so, so this, that all we disagree on, all we talk about, all the doctrines, all that, that one person means this and another means that and stuff, I can't bear relating to this so much. I don't manage to take a stand any longer, I kind of have taken a stand, and that is the most important.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 3; B3)

This woman seems to express a 'relaxed' religious identity. She has taken an active stand for Christianity and Jesus, is reconciled with her faith, and no longer finds mundane quarrels to be important. It is symptomatic that she is Christian, since Christianity is the majority religion and she does not feel a need to explain or defend her position. 'Relating to Jesus' is a sufficient statement. We did not find similar self-assured expressions from Muslim migrants, who face particular challenges as Muslim minorities (Leirvik, 2002: 14). The Muslim minority has to cope with an uninformed majority (with respect to Islam) as well as a hostile contemporary cultural

and political climate. Positioned as a religious minority in an unfriendly context, our Muslim respondents may have felt tempted or obliged not just to explain their faith as much as possible, but also to defend it.

The differentiation between religious institutions and God as a personal relation is also echoed in some of the Spanish interviews. For the Pentecostal women in Spain, 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 1; 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 […]'.*
>
> (Spain maj_min 5; Min_Maj_05)

Pentecostal participants sometimes discuss their religious identity in opposition to the dominant religion in Spain, Catholicism that is. These women described their Evangelical faith as a more personal religious experience based largely on establishing a closer relationship with God. Pentecostalism 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 2; Min_Maj_02)

Similarly, the same woman emphasises how the process of getting to know God is gradual and slow, 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.'*
> (Spain maj_min 2; Min_Maj_02)

Similarly, the woman quoted below argues that religious practice is not limited to going to church on Sundays, 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.'*
> (Spain maj_min 4; Min_Maj_04)

This woman describes religion a permeating totality ('a lifestyle', 'everything'), something that always must be attended to ('not about recharging').

4.5.2 Being or becoming – tradition or choice

The interviewees described different routes to their present religious belonging. Sometimes it was the product of socialisation, of being 'born into' a certain faith group and to take it for granted. At other times it was the result of a conscious choice that can be based on a sudden spiritual revelation, abrupt changes in life, or a gradual process of (re)orientation and learning. Also, religious belonging may be a product of both, as described by this Sunni woman in Norway:

> *'I feel that one is in a process all the time. As a Muslim there are no standards, in a way, there is no standard Muslim. We are learning new things all the time. Being born a Muslim means getting it in with the mother's milk, it becomes a habit, and you don't really know why you do it. And when you are asked, you don't really know. I have noticed this in particular when I meet someone who has converted to Islam. I guess it is like that with all religions, but then I feel that maybe they (converts) know more about why one does or doesn't do things than I do personally. So, in a way there is a process [utvikling], like (what I said earlier about) the new and the old generation (of migrant Muslim's). This is very interesting, right, because in a way one does things by force of habit. Then you get a question, and you don't quite know why you do this. And then you begin to search, why does one really do this? So, well, this is really interesting. But then there is this thing about knowing, maybe, to really be serious or sincere concerning one's faith.'*
> (Norway min_maj 1; C1)

This citation surely expresses a personal, reflective religious identity, in line with the complex understanding of identity as discursively formed rather than being a continuation of unambiguous tradition (Bredal, 2004).[76] The claim that 'there is no standard Muslim' is in line with scholars like Leirvik (2002) who have stressed the ongoing interpretation and negotiation work among Muslims in diaspora. The respondent describes about those who are practice religion as by force of custom ('it becomes a habit' for those who are 'born Muslim'), in contrast to converts ('who 'know more about why'). The reference to 'generation' is also in line with several respondents' argument that age or generational differences matters with respect to religious attitudes and practices. The distinction between the 'old and the young' generation with respect to immigration status or length of residence time is valid.

One of the young interviewees in Norway complained about the lack of knowledge about Islam. She claimed that Islam is not at all severe, but most (ethnic Norwegian) people seem to think so, she said, and went on:

> *'Many don't read it (the Qur'an) at all, nor the Bible or the books of the Pentateuch [Mosebøkene]. But they have their opinions, based on what their parents and grandparents say, right. I think this is a bit mistaken. One should obtain knowledge oneself. So, I cannot just sit and listen to my father, what he knows about Islam, that he maybe has heard from his grandfather or grand-grandfather, right? I have to provide knowledge myself, in order to understand others and myself and what Allah says, and which roads are the right ones and which paths I should take and stuff.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 2; D2)

The issues of generation and education are prominent in this citation (see also Leirvik, 2002; Jacobsen, 2006, 2009; Roald 2005); one should not just listen to what older people say, but rather educate oneself. One ought to understand, and not simply follow established traditions.

Another young Muslim woman told us that moving out of her parents' home and then meeting a Norwegian convert had been two major, motivating incidents with respect to making her want to understand Islam and not follow the inherited prescriptions. She wanted to understand 'the logic of Islam, Islam as a system' (Norway min_min

[76] For further information of discussions of identity as reflexive or traditional in Norwegian research on Muslims, see Bredal, 2004: 72-74.

1; D1). Her expression is interesting because it displays a mixture of reflexivity and loyalty to tradition. Reflexive (aspects of) identities were more prominent among the Muslim minority women (Norway min_min 1, 2, 4 and 5; D1, D2, D4, D5) compared to the Muslim majority, and more prominent among the younger than the older women.

Among the Sunni and Pentecostal women interviewed in Spain, 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 1; Maj_Maj_01)

This woman can't imagine herself belong to a different faith ('logically I was born Catholic'). She goes on emphasising the importance of Catholicism in her social context, suggesting that this in itself demonstrated the substance or significance of her religious adherence. Interestingly, there must have been either a turning point or a slow process of reaffirmation of her faith, in the sense that she explicitly mentions she is 'now' (now that she is older) sure of her religious belief ('my 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 2; Maj_Maj_02)

One Catholic woman, who did not present herself as particularly 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 4; 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]?'

Catholic women in Spain sometimes appear to take their religious identity for granted; sometimes their answers 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 belonging. This is intuitive in the sense that Catholicism is the majority religion in Spain;[77] 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, Pentecostals in Spain often build their religious identity in juxtaposition to Catholicism by emphasising their focus on God not the Church as an institution.

[77] 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. (See also Chapter 1 of this Working Paper).

4.5.3 Culture or religion

Sometimes, the interviewees differentiated between culture and religion, but for various reasons. We have seen how some Christian women blamed culture and not religious doctrines for being narrow. Also, some of the Muslims in Norway tended to blame cultural traditions for various practices said to be related to Islam, such as gender segregation (Norway min_min 1; D1) and forced marriage (Norway min_min 4; D4). This effort to cleanse Islam of negative practices and to attribute bad practices to Muslim 'culture' is, one might say, an example of using religion as a resource to increase respect and recognition.

A Pentecostal woman from Spain also made a distinction between culture and religion in order to separate Catholic and Pentecostal practices. According to her, one should not limit religion to going to church on Sundays, a practice which she associated with Catholics, but regard it as a lifestyle (Spain maj_min 4; Min_Maj 04).

A distinction between religion as more or less cultural, referring to believing and practicing as two different aspects, is also present in the interviews. Muslim women in Spain define their religious identity in a more cultural way; they describe themselves as true believers but they don't typically practice religion. Here, religion seems like a mechanism or resource 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 2; 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; Min_Min_05)

The two citations above emphasise the 'cultural' aspects of faith. Religion is mostly about social belonging ('important in a cultural, more than religious way'), to identify as a Muslim does not automatically imply behaving according to the prescriptions ('I don't practice religious principles').

The participant quoted next offers an interesting remark regarding religion and national background:

> *'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.'*
> (Spain min_min 3; Min_Min_03)

The woman quoted immediately above first describes her diverse multicultural background, with many religions and a mixed family. Then she adds how 'here', in Spain, she considers herself a Muslim. This is interesting in two ways. First, the statement implies that 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 family, and her background and so, she feels more of a Muslim.

4.5.4 Prejudice

Prejudice within and across denominations was discovered in the interviews. This was to be expected, given the historical struggle between various religions and denominations, and the hostility against Islam in particular.

In Norway, there were references in all the faith groups to 'being different' because of the respondents' religiosity (Norway maj_maj 1; A1). This experience of being 'different' was often described in positive terms, such as being a person worthy of trust, but we also noticed a definite difference between respondents belonging to a majority and a minority group. Negative aspects of being 'different' were an issue for some women belonging to the minority within Christianity and to almost all Muslim women. They claimed that religion situated them and described how much they had to explain and defend their faith. This was pertinent for Muslims after 9/11.

The Spanish report describes prejudice between Muslim denominations. Some Shia participants were reluctant, even hostile to mosques as they are associated with Muslims from other countries like Morocco or Arab countries that are perceived as 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].'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; Min_Min_05)

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

Here is 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 3; Min_Min_03)

The Shia respondent quoted above also conveys the idea that Mosques in Spain are undesirable places that she feels removed from. Mosques in Spain are cold, dirty places according to her, whilst other countries have likable mosques. She goes to mosques if she finds them nice ('beautiful mosques'), but she can't find such mosques in Spain.

When Shias were asked about the meaning of religion in their everyday life, some made an immediate association with other people being prejudiced against Shias, and described how that made them dress and behave in (religious) neutral ways. These respondents seemed to imply that if their religion did not impose (negative)

prescriptions, outsiders would not be affected by their religion either, and would not discriminate against them based on religious factors.

Also, none of the Shia interviewees in Spain wore the headscarf, so there would not have been external 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 for 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; Min_Min_05)

This woman described how she has developed a way of handling religious prejudice in Spain. Religion is usually no problem ('in my daily life'), and neither is her appearance (her 'complexion'). She does not dress according to 'religious obligations', and although she was raised to believe (her 'father tried to teach me religion'), she was never obliged to wear the headscarf ('never forced to cover myself'). Time has helped her ('I've been here a long time'), and she knows how to change her outfit according to context. Although she does not dress according to how she perceives 'religious obligation', there are clear boundaries in terms of how she will *not* dress: she will not wear 'short or very short clothes' nor sleeveless tops. Faith, for this woman, is clearly more than a product of socialization and tradition; it is more than naturalised conventions. She has a notion of how she 'ought to' behave according to religious obligations and her father's instructions, but she has a flexible view of religious practise.

4.5.5 Summary

Like Christian women, Muslims also take a personal approach to faith and display features of a personal (Anderson in Thun, 2004), or subjective religious identity (Fangen, 2007: 411). Muslim and Christian respondents seem to have an integrated, plural identity (Østberg, 2003); they have a plural understanding of themselves, consisting of several and often contradictory elements related to their transnational belongings as well as to their minoritised positioning within society, but at the same time they appear as integrated personalities. These aspects of Muslim religious identity are important with respect to religion as a resource, because reflexivity allows for revisions and change contrary to naturalised or inherited faith.

While the interviewees confirmed notions of what religion does irrespective of religion, they displayed more differences when it comes to what religion is. Here we see more distinctions between the groups, although the borders are blurred. In our material we find that all the interviewees demonstrate a clear (conscious and articulated) stand on ethical issues such as showing respect, caring for others, speaking the truth and being honest. Their stands are based on a substantial reflexive relation to faith issues, across the Christianity-Islam divide.

One of the striking similarities - across the different religious belonging (congregations, mosques) - was the interviewees' focus on the importance of always showing *respect* for others. A typical statement was: *'I want to pay everyone deep respect, and to contribute to sharing what I have become part of regarding God and religion. Without being nagging.'* (Norway maj_maj 5; A5:5). Along the same lines was the focus of being honest and decent, of caring for others.

Another similarity across the faith groups, pronounced clearly in the Norwegian material, was the respondents' focus on the religious practices of *reading* the sacred writings, and to *praying.* Although the actual habit of saying the prayers differed considerably - from efforts to implement the Islamic prescription to pray five times a day, to the habit of what one of the Christian interviewees labelled as a 'spontaneous' way of saying the prayers – the practicing of reading and praying permeated and structured the lives of our respondents.

A third characteristic is the focus on religion as entirety or totality of life, of faith and practice, of knowledge/thinking and doing. Some interviewees, however, differentiated between faith and practice and took a more cultural approach.

There was a general description of religion/religious practices and interpretations as changing. This was often intertwined with reflections on social or cultural change. Change is associated with various issues, but in line with Jacobsen's (2009) findings, gender, generation and geography were significant. Claims of change are underpinned differently, however: Christian women sometimes refer to women's access to new religious positions, while Muslim women often mention the new emphasis on the female dress code. For instance, old and young women across the faith groups in the Norwegian data material maintain that there are less restrictions on the younger generation compared to the older (such as norms of selecting friends and marriage partner within the faith community).

Generally, there are strong indications in support of the hypothesis of increasing reflexivity and detraditionalisation (Jacobsen, 2002; Østberg, 2003), discussed in Chapter 2. We also noticed that geographical/national belonging tends to be a point of reference when the respondents are asked about potential changes in gender norms: Christian women with a missionary background claim that their community is more liberal that it used to be. Some women with an ethnic minority background refer to change in the sense of stricter prescriptions as a consequence of living in diaspora, but others maintain that there is relatively more freedom for women in their faith group in Norway compared to their country of family origin. Some of the (Christian) interviewees also talked about change referring to more ecumenical attitudes and practices.

These findings indicate that aspects of ethnicity, family relations, and personal achievements shape the women's identities, whilst religion provides a deep sense of value or meaning to their identities, to their everyday lives, and to their sense of communal belonging. Thus, for participants in this study religion has significantly shaped their identities and their everyday behaviour and actions. Other factors, such as their geographic location, familial positions, or their personal achievements, provide further aspects or layers of their identities. Altogether, the women presented

themselves to us with plural integrated identities (Østberg, 2003) for which their personal religious faith and practice provided fundamental meaning and purpose.

In summary, the meaning of religion to identity was represented by women in our study as a basis of the values and meanings which shape their way of life. Participants' personal faith, be it either Christian or Muslim, structures and guides their way of life within the home and in their respective communities. One of the issues raised was the dislike of labelling, including the use of the term 'religious' as part of their identity. It raises the question why do some women dislike to be labelled? The rejection of labelling could be an indication that some do not want to be judged by the expectation or interpretations of others, they want to be 'who they are' and not to conform to perceived identities formed by others including the media. It could also be a desire to be part of the majority and not to be regarded as different. There were some silences in the interview data however; in relation to the women's status in society. Some of the participants were in public positions, for example a governor of a school, in their respective communities or churches, but they did not explicitly identify themselves with such positions. However, it is difficult to argue whether they were being modest in describing their identity or did not want to include their public life in describing their personal identity.

4.6 Religious figures to admire

Participants in our study presented their faith as a moral guide, and we sought to explore their views on gender relations by asking about the religious figures they admired: 'Are there any women in your religious tradition that you admire? (Historical or contemporary figures). Why do you admire them?' We further asked 'Are there any men in your religious tradition that you admire (historical or contemporary) figures? Why do you admire them?' We analysed the responses to gain insight into both religious identity and views on gender equality.

The interviewees mentioned famous figures from the past related to their own tradition (such as the Prophet Mohammed, Imam Ali, Jesus Christ, Virgin Maria,

Francis of Assisi[78] and Mother Theresa[79]). Contemporary public figures were also mentioned (politicians, intellectuals, missionaries, celebrities), figures that the respondents knew personally (a teacher, a priest, an Imam), members of their own families (a mother, a husband, a relative), and sometimes also anonymous individuals. The descriptions of religious figures admired by participants in our study revealed that most of the qualities held in high esteem were viewed as related to their faiths, such as compassion, devotion, strength of character, integrity, knowledge, and adherence to the prescriptive rules of their faith. Qualities related to religious leadership, such as entrepreneurship, inspiring roles, tolerance and openness, were described as admirable, and several respondents admired women (and men) who struggled for women's rights.

The use of similar words and expressions does not necessarily refer to the same normative references across the religious groups, however, and we discuss some differences between Muslim and Christian women bearing this in mind.

In this section, we present similarities across the countries and then discuss the responses according to religious affiliation.

4.6.1 Women's rights and women who 'stand up'

Several interviewees admired rebellious women, or women who stood up for women's rights and for individual women, historical and contemporary. References to famous historic feminists were rare, but the suffragettes, such as Emily Pankhurst, were mentioned by a UK respondent. Also, there were several references to women who (had) fought for women's access to religious leadership positions; Christian respondents in Norway and the UK mentioned their admiration for women who had participated in the struggle for female priests. The contemporary women most admired by Christian interviewees in the UK were female vicars who showed strength of character during the struggle for female ordination in the Anglican Church.

[78] Francis of Assisi was a Catholic deacon and preacher. He was the founder of the Order of Friars Minor or the Franciscans.

[79] Mother Theresa was a Catholic nun of Albanian ethnicity and Indian citizenship. She founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India, in 1950. Following her death she was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

Likewise, Muslim women described their admiration for girls and women who came forward, held an opinion and stood up for their choice. Women who had made a difference, for example related to public debates about the hijab, were admired. One woman commented on a case related to a furniture store,[80] and told us that she actually knew and admired the involved woman:

> *'It was cool because she was involved and had a court case. It is interesting that you stand there and do not just struggle for yourself but also for likeminded. That was historic, maybe?'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 1; C1)

This respondent admired women for demanding the rights of other individuals ('not just struggle for yourself'), and taking cases to court ('it was cool', it was 'historic').

Another Muslim respondent held the Pakistan lawyer Asma Jahangir[81] in high esteem, and also mentioned women in general who made an effort: '*lots of women who work actively for the wellbeing of women and their rights'* (Norway min_maj 3; C3).

Muslim respondents often referred to women in the Qur'an as role models: 'As a Muslim woman you should not be quiet, silent and kind', one woman said (Norway min_min 4), but rather be like the prophet's grandchild Zainab who courageously took the floor when needed and spoke against injustice. 'In Norway there are no learned women' she said, 'but some of them know a lot and they are clever and take part in public debates.' (Norway min_min 4). This respondent maintained that although there are no 'learned' (Muslim) women in Norway, there are skilful and outspoken women whom she looks up to.

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[80] In 2004 Ambreen Pervez lost her job at A-møbler (a furniture store) in Oslo because she wore a hijab. The company claimed that the hijab was against the dress code of the store, which forbids the use of a cap and other head garments. Pervez had held a summer job at A-møbler, and then she did not wear the hijab, but then she accepted an offer for a part-time job, and also decided to wear their hijab. She brought her case for the Gender Equality Ombud, which concluded that A-møbler could not forbid their employees to wear a headscarf as long as it does not put people's lives and health in danger. A-møbler accepted the decision.

[81] Asma Jahangir is a human rights activist, and has been the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief since 2004. Previously, she served as the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary and Summary Executions. She is also chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

Female missionaries were admired by several Christian interviewees. A Norwegian respondent described her admiration for a particular missionary this way, 'She [the missionary] has realised her vision, she has made a genuine choice' (Norway maj_min 1; B1). The devotion to stand up for her ideas ('a genuine choice') was admired, in contrast to the traditional ideals of women who were expected to remain in the kitchen, make food and serve.

Generally, there were numerous examples of respondents who held women who 'dare to stand up for themselves, to be themselves' (N maj_maj 3; A3) in high esteem. Muslim respondents in Spain, for example, admired women who represented 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 1; Maj_Min_01)

Another Sunni participant said:

> *'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 …'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 5; Maj_Min_05)

The interviewee quoted above did not specifically refer to religious figures. First she stated that she is not easily impressed in general, however, she admired people who rose above the circumstances with their effort and hard work, such as widows. Then she discussed another example, a poet who also overcame the limitations of her context and later become an acclaimed writer and poet.

Another participant in Spain made 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.

Eloquent and assertive women were sometimes admired. In the UK, for example, the actresses Joyce Huggart and Joanna Lumley were mentioned. They are not primarily known for their religious beliefs, but because of the roles they have played in social and political issues.

Admiration was also expressed for individuals who are highly educated and firm in their 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 …'*
>
> (Spain min_min 3; Min_Min_03)

The next citation also described admiration for strong historic women who overcame contextual barriers. For example, women who would engage in intellectual as well as religious discussions and would stand up 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 3; Maj_Min_03)

Also, the paragraph above suggests that Muslim women did have an important religious role historically, and were admired for their key or leadership roles.

The next interviewee described her admiration for people who had manners ('behave correctly'):

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

This woman did not come up with a name of any religious woman to admire ('a religious role model is hard to find'). She mentioned a friend whom she looked up to, but the impression is that, deep down, this interviewee thought that nobody deserved to be admired more than others, or in her words, 'nobody is perfect'.

4.6.2 Narratives and historic figures

A striking difference in the data material was the extent to which Muslim respondents applied historical narratives compared to Christian women. Muslim women in Norway and the UK often referred to narrations of historical figures from the time of the prophet Mohammed when asked about admired figures. Core incidents in historical women's lives were described, sometimes in detail. Frequently mentioned figures in the Norwegian and UK material were Khadijah, the first wife of the Prophet and also a business woman; Aisha, also a wife of the Prophet and a learned woman who compiled the hadiths; Fatima, a daughter of the Prophet who claimed land and challenged male religious leaders; and Zainab, daughter of Fatima and the sister of Imam Husain, taken prisoner during the struggle at Kerbala in 680 AC and thereafter playing a major role in the religious strife between Shia and Sunni Muslims. The Prophet's wives were described as suitable role models for women to emulate because they were believed to be good wives, good housekeepers, respectful, and to possess entrepreneurial skills. The life of Khadijah, according to several Muslim participants, invalidated the notion that Muslim women should not work outside the home.

Unlike Muslim women, who always mentioned their admiration for the Prophet Mohammed, and described the women in his family, Christian women in Norway and the UK rarely referred to Jesus Christ, and if they mentioned historic or Biblical women, they did it quite briefly. Christian respondents were more inclined to mention contemporary religious women, or more recent figures like Mother Theresa. Women from the Lutheran group in Norway, however, usually referred to historic figures such as Catharina of Siena, Theresa of Avila and men like Ignatius of Antika and Francis of Assisi, who were intimately related to the 'retreat' or meditative character of their group:

> *'I find resonance, or a yearning, or [these individuals] touch some of the longing, some of my own longing to give oneself over with life in a way. To indulge in God and to live determined, and to have a commitment in everyday*

life at the same time. This strong integrated totality of faith and life, that these persons have. And not the least the experiences they had by taking God seriously. That I think was exciting to read. Inspiring. They are in a way, a long way ahead, but they still pull a yearning in me which is kind of clear, or which touches something, very strongly, in fact.'

(Norway maj_maj 4; A4)

This woman described her longing to give herself over to God ('to indulge in God'), how she admired individuals who were able to combine the spiritual and the mundane ('faith and life'), and how such individuals affected her.

The historical figures admired by the UK women included both Biblical figures such as Mary and Esther, and other religious women in society including the missionary women Patricia St. John,[82] Mother Theresa, and Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley.[83]

The observed differences in applying religious narratives by Muslim and Christian women is related to several issues; one issue is the different traditions regarding genres (Leirvik, 2002), because the narrative genre is more widespread among the Muslim respondents.[84] Also, the position of (some) of the researchers probably also had an impact. The Muslim respondents were aware of (some) researchers' ignorance regarding the history of Islam, and willingly outlined the stories of their admired figures, often in detail and with enthusiasm. Sometimes the researchers encouraged them to do so, but not always. We also believe that the continuous critique of Islam in the public sphere in general, and the (misplaced) perception of Muslim women as weak and as victims of misogynist religious cultures in particular, have contributed to a negative image of Muslims. The interviews gave the Muslim women a chance to speak against this public representation, and they took the opportunity to do so. The Christian respondents probably took it for granted – and

[82] Patricia St.John was an English writer who worked most of her life as a missionary nurse in Morocco.

[83] John Wesley was a front figure in the establishment of the Methodist Church, Charles Wesley was his brother, Susanna Wesley was their mother.

[84] Leirvik (2002: 22) describes three ethical genres in Islam: a) the *prescriptive genre* – an orientation towards rules like the *Hadiths,* the *Qur'an's* guidance or the examples of Muhammad; b) the *narrative genre* – the retelling of good and elevating examples, as in the mysticism; and c) the *discursive genre* – an analytical and discussing approach to ethics, a concern with the foundation of ethics rather than the concrete shaping of morals.

rightly so – that the researchers were (more) familiar with the Christian persons and prescriptions they referred to.

We also noticed how various female figures from the Qur'an play significant roles in contemporary gender struggles. They serve as good role models for Muslim women, and often give them guidance, strength and hope regarding their rights as women. The admired figures serve as counter proof to accusations against Islam of being a patriarchal religion since they are part of the claimed historical heritage of gender equality within Islam. Likewise, the strong female figures potentially play a vital role in the internal gender negotiations within contemporary Muslim communities, as evidence of what a real or 'authentic' Muslim community should be like. Several references to well educated women today, who were said to know Islam well, even by heart, point in the same direction. Lack of competence in 'real' Islam is a problem according to some respondents because it inhibits proper discussions of their faith.

4.6.3 Anonymous women

A number of Christian interviewees in Spain, unlike Norwegian and UK respondents, made an allusion to 'anonymous people' or 'invisible people' when describing admired persons:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 1; Maj_Maj_01)

This woman admired people who were dedicated to improve the lives of others, but who wanted to remain anonymous.

Like women in the UK and Norway, the Spanish Christian respondents often admired women possessing attributes such as charity, compassion and kindness. Catholic and Pentecostal interviewees discussed 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 1; Min_Maj_01)

One Catholic woman in Spain contrasted the religious figures she admired with those admired by the Pentecostal community:

> *'I admire the Virgin Mary. Our religion is not like Evangelicals'. We do believe in the Virgin Mary.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 2; Maj_Maj_02)

In addition to the well-known figures already mentioned, such as Saint Teresa of Jesus[85] and Teresa of Calcutta, this Spanish Catholic participant highlighted her admiration for a religious woman who, she described, had experienced a change in her life:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 2; Maj_Maj_04)

The citation above illustrates the idea of a vital turning point in admired peoples' lives. This is a recurrent issue in some interviews; holding people who changed and reoriented their lives in high esteem.

Other participants - in Spain, Norway and the UK - adopted a closer or more personal approach, and mentioned friends and acquaintances among the people they admired:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 2; Min_Maj_02)

[85] Teresa of Jesus is also known as Teresa of Ávila, a Spanish Caramelite nun and reformer, canonised in 1622 and named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

This participant from Spain admired qualities such as optimism, strength, and faith, traits that are also mentioned by women in Norway and the UK, which characterised a friend of hers. Similarly, the Pentecostal 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 4; Min_Maj_04)

In general, Christian interviewees are more specific and articulate when describing admired others who are also close to them. However, one Spanish interviewee offered a very detailed account of the Biblical figure 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 3; Min_Maj_03)

According to this account, Esther is admired because of her youth and beauty (she was 'young and pretty'), stereotypical female traits, but also because she was humble about it ('she was also very smart' and saw 'beyond her physical beauty'). She was faithful to God, and she struggled for her community. Interestingly, the interviewee points out that Esther's most valuable quality is that she put all her qualities in God's hands and 'consented to be the instrument of God'.

4.6.4 Admired men

The respondents admired men, like women, of various kinds: historical figures; famous contemporary men; and men in their religious community and family members. They were admired for a range of reasons – often similar to those mentioned for women - such as their personal character, their bravery and modesty, their struggle for other people, their spiritual deeds and endurance. Male figures, both historical and contemporary, were admired for their leadership qualities. The roles that priests, Imams or other mosque leaders play as educators and/or as counselors – and entrepreneurial skills - were qualities admired in contemporary men. In this section, we discuss the data material by country.

4.6.4.1 Admired men among Norwegian respondents

Men who stood up for women's rights were sometimes mentioned. A Norwegian Christian woman explained her admiration for men who had believed in her, and who - through their preaching – had challenged her to think beyond what she would otherwise have thought:

> *'These men stood for something that was worth while listening to, and made me walk in a direction, walk further, take education [...]. I admire their engagement to want things beyond themselves. They don't have to be Christian for me to admire them. Engagement and the will to matter for other people.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 5; A5)

This respondent admired men who had given her strength and confidence to change herself ('walk further'), and for their engagement to look beyond themselves ('to matter for other people'). These are also qualities often related to women's roles.

Likewise, a Norwegian Muslim respondent described how she admired men who were active and promoted the well-being of others. She mentioned one particular leader who took the initiative to lead the Friday prayer and in this way established a Muslim milieu: 'Without that person we would not have had the Friday prayer.' (Norway min_maj 1; C1).

Men were also held in high esteem when they spoke about deeply personal matters. A Lutheran respondent in Norway, who made a connection between figures she admired and the shame many women carry for not being 'good enough', looked up to women and men who were true with respect to themselves and talked openly about difficult aspects of life. This, she claimed, would also enable them to be more true to God. She outlined her admiration for one particular man, and then made a more general argument:

> *'He is very honest about being a human, to talk truthfully about life, the fragility and vulnerability of life, and the strength in life – or that people should not be measured by their earning power or intellectual capacity, but by being a human being […] [A3] The important thing is that men are true, that the whole personality is included, that the connection between head and heart is there.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

This woman's admiration for men's capacity to be truthful ('talk truthfully'), and to be complete or whole persons ('head and heart') appropriately expresses a fundamental aspect of our respondent's religious identities - across faith groups.

There were several indications of admiration for men who displayed 'feminine' features. One example is this Muslim respondent in Norway who first explained her admiration for all the Prophets because 'each of them has a quality that is particularly outstanding and special' (Nor min_min 4; D4), and then added that 'generosity and patience' are valuable qualities. In order to explain, she described one of the Imams:

> *'He is rough and sensitive at the same time – he is a favourite. Amongst the Shia, people are like crazy about him.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 4; D4)

This woman admired men with exceptional and special characteristics, but she also emphasised that she looked up to men who combined what is often regarded as typically masculine ('rough') and feminine (sensitive') traits. She was not the only one to admire this mix.

Communicative skills were looked up to, like this Muslim woman (Norway min_maj 5; C5) who admired several men in the community, in addition to the Prophet. She held the Imam in high esteem because of his 'fine personality', and also because he was someone with whom she could speak openly:

> *'Lots of people talk about strict Imams'*, she says, *'but this man is nice and you get responses to anything you question. He is easy to communicate with.'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 5; C5)

This woman emphasised, in addition to being tolerant, the communicative ('easy to communicate with') capacity of the Imam, which is also often thought to be a feminine characteristic.

4.6.4.2 Admired men among Spanish participants

Catholic participants in Spain were prone to thinking and talking about traditional Christian figures such as Jesus Christ. They explained their admiration in various ways. For example:

> *'Jesus. That's it. [I admire him] because he came to Earth and set an example [for the rest of us].'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 02; Maj_Maj_02)

This citation was brief and rather prosaic, compared to a Pentecostal participant who, in a more passionate manner, said:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 03;Min_Maj_03)

This participant referred, like other respondents, to Jesus' main attribute as his capacity to love (he 'gave his life for me'). She admired Jesus Christ for enduring

suffering, physical pain and betrayal because he cared deeply about his fellow human beings.

When the Spanish respondents discussed admired male Christian figures, some participants mentioned 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 01; 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, and because the interviewee appreciates how this man is 'tangible'. Even though Pentecostals experience God in a personal way, the quote above suggests that concrete and physical figures can be very influential. Qualities related to bravery and modesty are mentioned as the most relevant qualities.

One Pentecostal woman put 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 02; Min_Maj_02)

This citation indicated that uplifting, cheerful and dynamic ('entrepreneurial man') people were very much admired. These characteristics were related to endurance and bravery - i.e., individuals who simply won't give up but carry out their duty in a positive manner. Also, the notion of change and personal growth was highly esteemed.

The Pentecostal woman quoted below also admired male figures in her own community. She mentions the priest of her Church who is also the founder of the Church:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 04; Min_Maj_04)

Although Spanish Catholics admired famous men, they also often included the deeds of anonymous men, like they had done regarding admired women:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 4; 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 01; Min_Maj_01)

Like several Norwegian and UK respondents, Spanish participants valued men who possessed what could be viewed as stereotypically female traits such as kindness, personal sacrifice and commitment. This may suggest that religious admiration is differently gendered than, say, professional admiration.

Muslim participants in Spain, like women in Norway and the UK, highlighted Mohammed 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?'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 01; Maj_Min_01)

'The prophet Muhammad … he is an example of all good things.'
(Spain min_maj 05; Maj_Min_05)

Above all, Muhammed was portrayed by the Spanish Muslim women as brave, confident and perseverant.

Imam Ali was also admired, as in Norway, for instance like this:

'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.'
(Spain min_min 02; Min_Min_02)

Imam Ali was admired because of several traits ('many virtues'), including his writings ('a great writer') and his book of religious teachings.

Wisdom was often described as an admirable feature, for instance in this response:

'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.'
Spain min_min 05 (Min_Min_05)

The woman underlines that she does not admire this man because of his power and prestige, but rather because he is learned ('a product of studying'), and also a good consultant ('everybody went to').

Several Spanish participants preferred to talk about male figures in their own environment, 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.'
(Spain min_min 03; Min_Min_03)

Tolerance and open-mindedness are the qualities that stand out in her father in law, in contrast to other figures who may not have been as respectful or accepting of faith diversity within the family.

Finally, this Sunni interviewee showed admiration for her father and, especially, her boyfriend who converted to Islam:

> *'[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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 03; Maj_Min_03)

It is interesting that this and the previous quote refer to members of the participant's family and also to stories about religious tolerance from Christians. This indicates that these Muslim respondents are particularly appreciative of attempts to understand Islam made by people from other religious traditions.

4.6.4.3 Admired men among respondents in the UK

Muslim women in the UK, like those in Norway and Spain, also admired historical male figures. In addition to the Prophet Muhammed and Ali ibn Ali Talib, the son-in-law of Prophet Muhammed, some of them also mentioned Ayatollah Khomeini, a past leader of Iran. These men were all admired mainly for their leadership roles and charisma.

The roles that the Imams or other mosque leaders play as educators and/or as counselors were qualities admired in contemporary men.

Unlike Muslim women in the UK, who always mentioned their admiration for the Prophet Muhammed, only one Christian participant mentioned Jesus Christ. This is more in line with the Norwegian respondents who rarely mentioned biblical figures. Male characters admired by the Christian UK respondents were King David, a biblical figure; Francis of Assisi, a missionary and saint; and the Reverend Cleaves,

an Anglican priest. These men were admired for their evangelical work, compassionate qualities and inspiring roles.

Similar to Muslim participants, many of the Christian interviewees admired leaders of the Church, including Anglican leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Archbishop John Sentamu. These men were admired for the roles they play in the society and their strength of character. Nelson Mandela, South African black leader and former President, was also identified as a figure with similar qualities.

Many of the UK interviewees, like those in Norway and Spain, admired their respective priest, vicars or Imams because of their inspiring roles. They also admired historic leaders, in the Bible for Christians and in the Qur'an for Muslims participants.

4.6.5 Summary

Women from the four religious groups admire a variety of qualities among women and men within and outside of their own religious tradition. They refer to historical figures in the Bible or Qur'an, famous contemporary religious and political figures, men and women in their communities and in their families. The qualities admired in the described individuals often relate to faith practices, such as personal sacrifice, kindness, devotion, commitment and perseverance. Integrity, goodness and altruism were admired, in particular if it was seen as part of a 'true nature'. Admired qualities also often related to the respondents' religious communities, such as good leadership, entrepreneurship, being inspirational, good advisors and/or communicators. Also, there were many references to admired traits such as wisdom, tolerance and truthfulness. The ability to combine prescriptive roles with secular activities was admired irrespective of religious tradition.

A distinct difference is suggested between the religious affiliations: the Muslim women were more consistent in describing their admiration for the Prophet Muhammed, his wives Kadijah and Aisha, and his daughter Fatima, than the Christian women were in their description of historical figures. The data material also indicates that Muslim women more often than Christian women described their admiration of historical and contemporary female figures through narratives, while

Christian respondents more often briefly referred to features such as strength of character, compassion and truthfulness.

We have noticed that contemporary Muslim women were often admired because of their extensive knowledge of historical issues, their eloquence on issues related to Islam, and their participation in community issues and interactions with other faiths. Historical females were admired as models of the prescriptive gender roles of the faith, but also because they were learned, ran their business and struggled against injustice – and thus demonstrated women's rights within Islam.

Men were not admired for traditional masculine physical attributes. Although admired women were sometimes also described as beautiful, admired men and women were thought to possess very similar qualities, and seemed to be held in high esteem largely because of the same reasons. In guarded terms, then, there was more often an inclination to admire women and men for similar traits rather than different ones. The exception was a slight tendency to admire women for nurturing traits and clearly to admire men for various leadership roles. Interestingly however, there were also several examples of admired men who were characterised as having stereotypical female features such as compassion, caring for others, renunciation, suffering and communication.

Women, and some men, were admired because of their efforts to improve women's rights. Several respondents admired women for being highly educated and firm, open-minded and fearless, and for overcoming contextual barriers – suggesting women have (had) important religious roles across the faith traditions.

Admiration for tolerance and open-mindedness indicate that active religious women, irrespective of tradition, are exposed to intolerance and discrimination. References of religious tolerance from Christians towards Muslims, indicate that Muslim women are particularly appreciative of attempts to understand Islam by other religious traditions.

4.7 Religion as flexible, fixed or both

In this section, the issue at stake is if and how the interviewees indicated an approach to religion as a flexible resource or not. In particular, we are interested in the interviewee's relations to the gendered features of their faith tradition and community. Do they view religious institutions and practices as fixed, or do they conversely have more flexible interpretations which permit the adaptation of faith practices and belonging to changing social circumstances, or what we term the adaptation and use of religion as a resource?

This section summarises the previous examination of descriptions of what religion means; whether and how participants' personal approach to religion is flexible, fixed or both. Based on the interviews, we distinguish analytically between religion as a flexible resource on three levels: the personal, congregational and institutional. We also differentiate between direct or explicit references to flexibility and indirect or implicit references to religion as a flexible resource.

Generally, our finding is that the research participants practice and interpret their religion rather flexibly. This is conveyed in a) the various ways in which they discuss religious institutions, denominations and practices during the interviews, and b) the ways in which they have described their religious identity. There were no indications of naturalised religious identities (silent, embodied and unquestioned identities), with the possible exeption of some of the Spanish Catholics who displayed a less reflexive identity. Most respondents were socialised or 'born into' their faith community, but during their life course reflexive attitudes evolved and traditional norms and practices were questioned and (sometimes) reinterpreted.

In the table below we have systematised examples, issues and incidents of religious flexibility -described by the interviewees - according to their *level* (individual, community and institutional) and their *character* (explicit or implicit).

Table 4.1 Religion as flexible

Level	Direct/ explicit	Indirect/ implicit
Personal level	Religion as a choice	Studying the Bible/Quran
	Practices versus beliefs	Being part of a group of people who share common values
	Converting to other religions	Participating in organised activities, e.g. member of the Islamic Women's Centre Association
	Leaving for other denominations	Gaining awareness of one's faith when meeting different people
	Hijab/dressing as cultural and situational	
	Volunteering for activities	
	Researching other faiths	
Congregation	Accepting women priests	Encouraging more Muslim women to participate in the community Hiring liberal priests/imams
	Accepting lay women preachers	Women taking leadership roles in various activities, e.g. leading worship and as members of church management committees
	Accepting women leading worship and prayers	From memorising to discussing and learning, from recitiation to reinterpretation
	Women-only facilities at the mosque, or gender mixed space	
	Social cohesion	
	Space for Muslim women to meet and organise activities	Opportunities to organise activities of interest
		Empowerment of women to be involved in community and political issues
Institutional	Women lay preachers	Multiple roles played in Christian activities
	Women leading worship	
	Women leading prayer meetings	
	Women part of church committees	
	Women priests	
	New legislation	Flexible/new doctrines or interpretations of doctrines
	Flexible time/place for saying prayers	

4.8 Concluding remarks

In this chapter we have analysed selected groups of religiously active women from Christian congregations and Muslim mosques about the meaning of religion, inviting them to describe themselves and their religious identity. The 'meaning-making' function of religion was strongly confirmed in our interviews, but this does not necessarily imply that religious identities are fixed and stable. We found evidence of ongoing work of negotiations and reinterpretation of faith norms and practices within Islam and Christianity, indicating that religion is a flexible resource.

There are traces of shifting interplays between traditional belief practices and renewed interpretations of the faith foundations among our interviewees of all faith communities. Regarding the Muslim interviewees, we found that several women – like many second generation Muslims – have turned to the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* in order to study the religious texts themselves instead of memorising them. This confirms a potential for Muslim reinterpretations and the flexible adaptation of prescriptions and dogma to contemporary European society, captured in the concept 'Euro Islam'. This is a fluid concept that implies opposite tendencies; Euro-Islam may encourage a withdrawal from the society in order for Muslims to live life according to traditional cultural norms and restricted to one's 'own' ethnic and religious sphere, but it may also stimulate a flexible adaptation of norms and practices to the actual social context.

We have noticed that geographical and/or national belonging tended to be a point of reference when the respondents discussed changes in gender norms. Christian women with a missionary background claimed that their community was more liberal than it used to be. Some women with an ethnic minority background referred to change in the sense of having to cope with stricter prescriptions in diaspora, but others maintained that there was relatively more freedom for women within their faith group now compared to their country of family origin. Some of the (Christian) interviewees talked about change with respect to more ecumenical attitudes and practices. In Norway, old and young women across the faith groups highlighted less restrictions on the younger generation compared to the older, for example, regarding norms of selecting friends and marriage partner within the faith community.

We also found evidence that living as a religious minority has an impact regarding experiences of prejudice and discrimination (Leirvik, 2002; Jacobsen, 2002). There was a striking inclination among the Muslim women in Norway to reflect on what they perceived as similarities among practicing religious individuals across faith groups, like decency and ethics. Likewise, Muslim women in Spain described tolerance from Christian people as an admirable trait.

Generally, there are strong indications in support of the hypothesis of increasing reflexivity and detraditionalisation (Jacobsen, 2002; Østberg, 2003), discussed in Chapter 2.

The respondents do not have naturalised (silent, unquestioned, embodied) religious identities. Those who said they were 'born into' their faith community were no exeption, but displayed earnest, reflective attitudes to their faith. All respondents tended to see their faith as a constitutive or very important part of their lives. Very few had withdrawn from a religious community, but there were several stories of incidents or processes that led to changes in their religious identities and/or practices. The respondents have wondered about their faith, some have expressed periods of doubt, and they have searched for more information and deeper understanding. The overall impression is that the women we interviewed had a firm religious identity. They knew where they belonged and where they stood, so to speak.

Regarding everyday religious practices, there were consistent references to frequent and usually regular religious activities like praying, reading, fasting and going to the mosque/church/platform (practices which are no longer shared by the majority of people in Norway, Spain and the UK; see Chapter 1). Also, the interviewees often mentioned their participation in a number of social activities, such as doing voluntary work in the neighbourhood, school or for the congregation/community. Women from the Christian communities in Norway seemed to be somewhat more entrenched in faith related congregational activities than Muslim women, however. This could be a consequence of their belonging to the ethnic and religious majority with its institutionalised activities. Muslim women in Norway and Spain seem to struggle

more with practical issues such as language skills, figuring out how to cope with dress codes (mostly the hijab issue), finding a place and time for praying and are obviously concerned with everyday problems outside of religious issues. Cultural commuting and creolised everyday practices (Østberg, 2003) were quite noticeable among Muslim migrants.

Identities are constructed through a complex interplay of internal and external processes, and are being reworked, reshaped and changed throughout the life-course. The notion of plural integrated identities (Østberg, 2003) signals that although identities are situational and adapt to shifting contexts, the different aspects of identities are integrated into a 'whole' self. One objective of this study was to examine individual religious identities and practices which may provide resources or barriers to citizenship. This chapter has presented how participants in our study described the meaning of religion to their identities, and whether they perceived their religion as fixed, flexible or both. Their responses suggest that different parts of their cultural environment are influencing their lives; a process which Hylland Eriksen (2007a; 2007b) describes as hybridity, where individuals reflexively and creatively combine different cultural forms.

In summary, the meaning of religion to identity was represented as the basis for the values and meanings which shaped the participants' way of life. Participants' personal faith, be it either Christian or Muslim, structured and guided their norms and practices within the home and in their respective communities – in flexible ways. In the lives of the research respondents, religion obviously is a potential resource – but the potential for change seems to be limited to complementary rather than to similar or equal gender roles. The likelihood of applying this resource to promote gender equality will be addressed in a subsequent chapter (Chapter 6). What kind of resistance efforts of this kind could potentially mobilise, is outside of the scope of this report.

5 CITIZENSHIP

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we explore the term 'citizenship', both in more general terms and specifically in relation to religion. In the previous chapter on religious identity (Chapter 4), we saw the importance of belonging to a religious community, and this theme will be explored further in Chapter 5. As we will see, identity and citizenship are closely connected.

The first part of this chapter looks at how our respondents in Norway,[86] Spain and the UK talk about citizenship. We explore the respondents' understanding of the term citizenship and what they considered to be 'a good citizen'. In the second part of this chapter we address 'religious citizenship' and how it was understood and talked about by research participants in Norway, Spain and the UK. 'Religious citizenship' was a new term for our respondents; however, most of them thought it made sense to include religion in a citizenship terminology. Here we explore how religious citizenship is understood, and how religious identity, participation and practice are linked to citizenship. The third part of the chapter asks whether religion is represented to be a resource or a barrier (or both) to citizenship as practice, focusing in particular on the Norwegian case. As part of a work in progress, Chapter 5 generally seeks to integrate findings from all three countries in the presentation and discussion of research findings. A more elaborate comparative analysis will be the aim for our further academic work on religious citizenship.

[86] In Norwegian, the word 'citizenship' usually refers to the legal aspect of citizenship (state citizenship; *statsborgerskap)*; to be a citizen of the Norwegian state means that you are granted legal citizenship in Norway. However, a broader understanding of citizenship, in the way we use it here (in the sense that we are all 'fellow citizens', which is translated from the Norwegian '*medborger)* is not a common word in Norwegian, except in academic language. However, the term '*medborgerskap'* (fellow citizen/ship), which signals a broad understanding of citizenship, seemed meaningful to our interviewees, as we shall see in this chapter. The Norwegian scholar Grete Brochmann (2002: 56-60) uses the Norwegian word *samfunnsborgerskap* ('society citizenship') in order to cover different aspects of the English word citizenship. She uses *statsborgerskap* ('state citizenship') about the legal dimension and *medborgerskap* ('fellow citizen/ship') about the social dimension (identity, loyalty, belonging, trust, and participation).

5.2 Understandings of citizenship

The concept of citizenship has multiple meanings, reflecting different histories within various countries (Lister et al. 2007). Hudson (2003) argues that the concept of citizenship is theorised as multilevel, heterogeneous and differential, resulting in the meaning of citizenship as differing depending on sites, contexts and domains. As Marshall (1950) has argued, citizenship encompasses not only membership of a nation-state, but also civil, political and social aspects of living in a particular place and time. Moreover, feminist contributions have broadened our understanding of citizenship significantly to include issues of identity, participation and belonging. Our findings indicate that religious women see such issues as central to their own understanding and practice of citizenship.

In our research, we are interested in how religious women think about and practice citizenship in their everyday lives. While informed by scholarly thinking about citizenship, we aim to examine how the concept of citizenship is commonly understood by religious women living in multicultural contexts in Norway, Spain and the UK. In particular, we are interested in whether the belief in and practicing of religion can be linked to ideas and practices of citizenship. We started by asking women interviewees in our study to respond to the question 'What does citizenship mean to you?'. Several themes were identified in the responses, including legal and political aspects of citizenship, being part of a collective and a feeling of belonging, issues of exclusion and inclusion, and understandings of what constitutes 'a good citizen'.

5.2.1 Legal and political aspects of citizenship

There were differences across the three countries in terms of the extent to which interviewees associated 'citizenship' with legal and political aspects. Our participants in Spain and in Norway made fewer references to political and legal dimensions of citizenship than our participants in the UK. However, some interviewees in Spain and Norway did refer to voting in political elections as an aspect of citizenship and as a democratic duty. Apart from the remarks on voting, there was a notable lack of references to citizenship as a legal status among our Spanish and Norwegian participants. While this could be expected from Spanish-

born and Norwegian-born participants without migrant backgrounds, insofar as they would take their Spanish and Norwegian citizenship status for granted, it is more puzzling for the rest of the interviewees. It could be that most participants from Spain and Norway with a migrant background have lived in these countries for a very long time, or were even born there, and as such they may also take their legal citizenship status for granted. Nevertheless, as this was also the case in the UK, and as none of our UK participants were recent newcomers to the country, we will seek to examine further the observed difference between Norway and Spain on the one hand, and the UK on the other. One Norwegian interviewee did, however, make a link between the notion of being a citizen and the ability to influence society through political and social participation:

> *'Well, that [fellow citizen (medborger)] is a word that I didn't have in my vocabulary [...]. But when I hear the word [fellow citizen/ship (medborgerskap)] then I think it has to do with being a citizen [borger] and to have the ability to influence, or to figure out and live together as citizens [borgere] in a society. That's the associations I get.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 6;A6)

As mentioned above, our interviews in Spain 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 1;Maj_Maj_01)

For a majority of the participants in the UK, however, the meaning of citizenship was immediately perceived in terms of its legal definition. One participant understood citizenship to mean being a member or citizen of a country, and saw citizenship first and foremost as a secular concept. She did, however, also link citizenship to faith, in as much as she perceives the following of 'Christian rules' to imply being a good citizen. She said:

> *'Citizenship is being a member, a citizen of the country. How I behave as a citizen is affected by my faith, and most of the Christian rules would lead towards a good citizen, I think. But I think it is something that, to me, the connotations are more connected with the secular relationships and so on, than anything else.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 2; **Anglican 2)**

Her comment suggests a possible tension between a secular and a religious understanding of what it means to be a citizen more generally, and what it means to be a *good* citizen in particular. Her comment relates the legal aspects of citizenship to the secular domain, while behavioural aspects related to 'good citizenship' is connected to, and informed by, religious principles. Another participant's understanding of citizenship focused on equal rights as a citizen:

> *'A member of a city, a person who has rights as everybody else.'*
>
> (UK min_min 1; **Shia 1)**

This Muslim participant suggests that citizenship ensures equal treatment, irrespective of one's identity or personal characteristics. An Anglican participant who also understood citizenship in terms of the rights of individuals underlined that citizens also have certain responsibilities. She further relates her understanding of the concept to being active in the local community, to voting in elections, and to global issues. She argued:

> *'I suppose it comes down in a sense to rights and responsibilities. A citizen will have certain rights, but I think also there are certain responsibilities on you and so, for example, you have the right to vote but also the responsibility of voting. I think you also have the responsibility to be active in your local community and I tend to do mine through the Church I suppose, which a lot of people might say is not a good activity, but that, you know, that is how I choose to do it.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 6; **Anglican 6)**

She acknowledges that one has rights as a citizen of a country whilst one also has responsibilities within the country; she highlights civil and social responsibilities by connecting citizenship with activities in the religious arena. She further argues on global responsibilities:

> *'And I think you can also be active globally, and that part is a part of being a citizen as well. So I am sort of concerned about the environment, […] I can make sure things are reused. So that is quite a big part to me of being a citizen.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 6; **Anglican 6)**

She uses a social definition of citizenship to suggest that she also has to be responsible for global issues, in her case the environment. Her comments thus suggest a link between citizenship and caring for the environment, or a form of

'environmental citizenship' (Isin and Wood, 1999). The quotes from this Anglican interviewee indicate how being a citizen is multi-faceted, via legal, political and social responsibilities. To her, the community, the environment, her country and the international community are all important contexts for responsibility.

Other participants' understanding of citizenship was about participating in political or social activities that might improve the quality of life of all in the society. One Pentecostal commented that:

> *'I think citizenship, to me, is about every individual having a place and playing a role, hopefully a positive role, to the benefit of society generally.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 4; **Pentecostal 4)**

A Sunni participant also stated that participating in the political process at the local level and being proud of the country is her understanding of citizenship. She said:

> *'Citizenship to me means participating in the political process, voting, making sure that my vote counts. Whether there are other political processes in place, for example, in the local area you have a neighbourhood watch system and things like this, at the local level getting involved. Strangely when I say that, but being proud of being British and a British Muslim.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 5; **Sunni 5)**

These comments indicate that the concept of citizenship is associated with active participation in the community, especially in social and political issues. Engaging in all aspects of the community was understood to be good citizenship practise.

A UK Shia participant's understanding of citizenship also reflected different issues; she started by saying, 'Citizenship, in this country, it is very important. Citizenship to me is having a liberation, the liberty of moving easily from one place to another.' Here she emphasises the ability to travel, which is enabled through her legal rights as a citizen of the country. She continues to argue how the need for a legal status was not part of 'God's initial design':

> *'OK. God created this world and did not make any boundaries, it is us humans who made the boundaries, […]. We should not have any passports; we should not have any visas or things like that. We should go freely to every country.'*
>
> (UK min_min 3*)*

She idealises a situation where movement from one geographic area to another would be easily attained without any official or legal requirements. She also highlights a difference between secular and religious notions of citizenship. Secular aspects are related to legal status and having a passport, and such aspects are perceived to produce and legitimate differences between individuals and groups who either have or do not have a particular legal status. In terms of religious dimensions of citizenship, on the other hand, the interviewee emphasises the equal status of all individuals, as all humans are created equal before God. In a sense, it could be argued that she uses her religious faith to question the legal and political distinctions made by secular society. She continued once again by highlighting the benefits of having a legal right to abode in a country:

> *'I think citizenship is very important. When you are having a citizenship you become loyal to the country as well. [...] When you have got citizenship you can go to all the professions and government departments. If you do not have citizenship you do not have a right to apply for those posts. I think citizenship is very important.'*
>
> (UK min_min 3; **Shia 3)**

This interviewee thus suggests that legal citizenship ensures the loyalty of citizens towards a country or nation state, and their eligibility for jobs within the jurisdiction of a particular state. Moreover, her understanding of citizenship includes the notion that citizenship implies no restrictions on geographical mobility, and that the acquisition of citizenship ensures an individual's right to services and to obtain jobs.

For some ethnic minority women in our study who had migrated to the UK, citizenship is not necessarily a permanent status but depends on the geographic location in which an individual is located, and as such it is changeable. One Sunni participant was of the view that citizenship is a formal, legal document indicating the part of the world in which one resides but, similar to other participants, she also had a religious take on citizenship, saying that 'we are all servants of God' and thus implying the equal status of all human beings before God:

> *'It is just a symbol of the place you live in, it is just a piece of paper telling you which part of the world you are living, or where you came from. Originally I am from Pakistan, so I have been living in the UK for 20 years so yes I would say, now I am a British citizen because I am living here and this is my homeland. But when it comes to citizenship, I would say, citizenship, there is*

no citizenship, we are all servants of God. Yes we have made the different cultures and we follow the different religions and have made the different rules of our own to some extent, that we can get away or we can dodge the things, but to me I just believe in one thing no matter which part of the world you are living and you have just got one thing to worry about, you came in this world a few days as a journey, you are returning back to your destiny and there is only one person and it is God.'

(UK min_maj 3; **Sunni 3)**

Her comments are thus similar to those of a previously quoted research participant (Shia 3), who stated that 'God created man free but boundaries are made by humans'. Such statements introduce a creationist point of view; the religious belief that humanity, life, the Earth, and the Universe were created in some form by a supernatural being or beings (Isaak, 2000). In relation to the notion of citizenship, a creationist view forwards the notion that we are all equal before God and that any differences in citizenship status on earth are man-made. Our interviewees imparted the notion that religious citizenship connotes equality or the equal status of all human beings, irrespective of their geographical location, ethnicity, or faith. Such reflections on the part of our interviewees clearly indicate the relevance of talking about 'religious citizenship' as well as legal, political and social citizenship. Later in this chapter we examine in more detail how our interviewees talk about citizenship in relation to religion.

Although our participants (in particular women who were interviewed in the UK) were referring to formal or legal citizenship, they also highlighted how the concept is multi-faceted by including rights and responsibilities, a sense of belonging and creationist perspectives. Further, the responses of the ethnic minority women suggest that acquisition of citizenship has provided them with an increased sense of security stemming from being granted citizenship in the country they have migrated to.

5.2.2 Being part of a collective

The interviewees especially emphasize the collective aspects of citizenship; to be a citizen with others, to be part of a community, and to belong to a community. Moreover, they mention the ability one has to influence, to take responsibility for others, and to help each other, both in the local community and in the society at large. Some of the interviewees also bring up international and global aspect of

citizenship, and the responsibility one has to think beyond oneself; to think about the community at local, national and international levels.

The quote below, from a Sunni woman in Norway, illustrates an 'anti-individualistic' view of being a 'fellow citizen' (*medborger*). Whereas the Norwegian word *statsborger* ('state citizen') relates to individual rights and duties towards the Norwegian state, the word *medborger* (fellow citizen')[87] gives associations to relations between people in a community, either in your neighbourhood or in society at large.

> *'Citizenship [medborgerskap] to me that means that you are a part of something. That you're not being egoistic in a way. [...] That you take part in the whole system, that you take responsibility for others as well. [...] Like, for instance, when you live in an apartment building you don't live all by yourself, you have neighbours, right? So then to be a citizen [medborger] you need to be together, to know about one another, to take responsibility for one another. [...] So in the society at large you also need to take responsibility, you can't just be egoistic. [...] After all we all live together in society. '*
>
> (Norway min_maj 1; C1)

Similarly, this quote from a Pentecostal woman in Spain emphasises that citizenship entails being part of a larger community and contributing positively to it:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 3; Min_Maj_03)

Her discourse is about making a contribution to society through active participation and through bettering yourself via education. For her, active citizenship implies helping your social context to improve or to progress. If you love your country, you will want it to become a better place for all to live in. It is interesting how this interviewee identifies and combines two levels of action: self-improvement through education, which will in turn be useful to society; and community participation which will more directly lead to societal progress. Similarly, this Shia woman from Spain argues that education and respect for the law are central to active citizenship:

> *'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*

[87] See footnote 1 in this chapter for the Norwegian terminology related to citizenship.

education […] to me it's about basic obligations, respecting the context where you live, the environment …'

(Spain min_min 2; Min_Min_02)

5.2.3 Belonging – to feel at home

Many of the participants in our study, be they from Norway, Spain or the UK, talked about the term citizenship as primarily connoting a sense of belonging to a community or society. Their discourse suggests that citizenship enables an individual to be part of a community, thus confirming feminist theorists' position that the concept of citizenship includes both a sense of belonging and community participation. As previously mentioned, citizenship as belonging is sometimes related to a particular nation-state, while at other times it is related to a specific local community, or even at the level of the neighbourhood and personal relationships:

'Then I think about being with my neighbours and those who live nearby. That is to be a citizen. And to have a good relationship with your neighbours, to chat and to have a cup of coffee together. To go for a walk together. That is what I think being a citizen is all about.'

(Norway maj_min 1; B1)

Interpersonal relationships was mentioned by several interviewees as providing a sense of belonging and a thus sense of citizenship. The interviewee below emphasises how she feels connected to other people through meeting, helping and co-operating with them:

'[…] Then I think about community [coming together; fellesskap]. To be a fellow human being, to help each other, to cooperate.'

(Norway min_min 1; D1)

When participants talk about citizenship in terms of belonging, some of them use words like 'heart', 'love', and 'being proud', and they illustrate how their understanding of the term citizenship is connected to emotions. The interviewees talk about a sense of belonging and to feel at home. Especially the Muslim respondents, who have an immigrant background or have parents with an immigrant background, who refer to their feelings for Norway/Spain/the UK and/or to their country of origin. They describe feelings of belonging to two different places and, in that respect, they can be citizens of two different countries. Several of our participants link citizenship to their national and religious identities – as Norwegian, British, or Spanish, and as Christian or Muslim. The interviewee below feels she is

both Norwegian and from her country of origin. She does not refer to any legal aspects of national identity, but rather to her feelings of being Norwegian and from her country of origin.

> *'I describe myself as…as a Norwegian, [the nationality of her country of origin], Muslim girl (laughter). […] That is my way of saying it. Because I am a girl from [my country of origin], and I live in Norway. I love [my country of origin] as much as I love Norway.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 2; D2)

> *'[…] When I look at my children, they, their hearts only beat for Norway. My heart beats for both Norway and [my country of origin].'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 2; C2)

An Anglican participant from the UK also commented that belonging to a community provides a sense of citizenship, she stated:

> *'I suppose it means just belonging to a community, yes belonging to a community. We all belong to a community because of where we live, yes.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 5; **Anglican 5)**

The quote indicates that we cannot isolate the concept of belonging from the understanding of citizenship. Belonging may, however, take different forms. A UK Sunni participant suggested that contributing to the community defines citizenship by saying:

> *'I think just being a decent human being and, you know, putting back in to the community.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 4; **Sunni 4)**

As mentioned by some of the women, citizenship bears responsibilities; this Sunni woman is also stating that contributing to one's community is part of her understanding of citizenship. Another Sunni woman emphasised that she is proud to belong to the UK:

> *'[T]o me citizenship means being proud of where I am from, being proud of my country, being proud of the Queen, some people look at me really strangely when I say that, but being proud of being British and a British Muslim.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 5; **Sunni 5)**

This interviewee is equally proud of both her nationality and her religion. She suggests that other people, ethnic minority and non-Muslim, may find it surprising to hear that she is proud of the Queen of England and of being British, as if being British and a Muslim at the same time cannot easily co-exist.

A UK Shia participant also suggested that 'belonging' for immigrants means that they have been successfully integrated into the host society, and that belonging, participation and integration provide a sense of citizenship. She said:

> *'Citizenship, oh belonging to the society, like integrating you know, being part of everything, from not the lowest levels but you know, all levels of society. We should respect this country because you know, for people coming in […] I have met some ladies, oh I have known them what, 30 odd years, still can't speak English you know. But you have to know what is going on you know.'*
>
> (UK min_min 4; **Shia 4)**

In her view, immigrants themselves have to be responsible for integrating into their adopted country by learning the English language.

On the other hand, one Pentecostal woman's interpretation of citizenship reflects a different understanding of belonging. Rather than belonging to a secular local or national community, she emphasises belonging in terms of having a close relationship with God. She stated:

> *'I think, for me, it, I would say I was on a journey, my citizenship is definitely in heaven, that is where I see it. Wherever the Lord wants me, I will be happy here, I would find it very hard to leave here [...] I've lived here for 42 years. But yes, for me, citizenship, if you had asked me that five or 10 years ago I wouldn't have, but now I say citizenship definitely with the Lord.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 1; **Pentecostal 1)**

This participant takes the debate of citizenship into the afterlife, where she would belong to God, similar to comments by other respondents who argued that citizenship is ultimately determined by a higher being, God. These participants thus explicitly linked a notion of citizenship with their religious beliefs.

Issues of belonging and national identity are prominent in the discourse of ethnic minority women in all three countries. For the UK ethnic minority participants, their length of stay in Britain had influenced how some of them presented themselves to us. A Pentecostal participant stated:

> *'So I would say I am, I regularly go back and forth to India, because I minister there, but I would say I was very much British to be honest, been here too long.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 1; **Pentecostal 1)**

This comment suggests that the interviewee feels she has become more British over time, so being British is not a static identity but a fluid and developing identity.

A Shia participant, on the other hand, viewed her acquisition of British citizenship as a momentous event that happened at a specific point in time, and considered herself British from then and onwards:

> *'I am a foreigner who came to England a long time ago, applied for nationality to become a British citizen.'*
>
> (UK min_min 3; **Shia 3)**

A Sunni with Pakistani heritage also argued that she did not identify with her family's country of origin (Pakistan) because she has been living in the UK all her life. She said:

> *'I am British. I suppose I am from Pakistani origin but I am British, I have lived here all my life, I don't know anything else really. I don't identify with Pakistan, not really, don't go there.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 4; **Sunni 4)**

She acknowledges her cultural heritage, but identified with being British because she has lived in the UK all her life.

These interviewees' comments depict the fluidity and multiple meanings of national identities; they all identify with the British nationality, yet they also make reference to their cultural identities as being different from their national identities.

A Shia participant argued, however, that her length of stay in the UK has not changed her identity. She said:

> *'I have been here more than I have been in Iran, definitely, but I still see myself as Iranian.'*
>
> (UK min_min 5; **Shia 5)**

The same respondent held the view that although she was British in legal terms, her culture does not make her British. She said:

> *'Sometimes I feel that, you know, because I have been here for so long, it is only right, I am living here, I am working here, I have got my family here,*

everything, it has got to be. But I know I am not, I am only British by name. I live here and pay tax, do work, everything, but truly I am not because my culture is different.'

(UK min_min 5; **Shia 5)**

Such comments reveal the challenges of having a hybrid national identity; these interviewees are British in a legal sense, yet they do not feel British because of their strong ties with another culture.

Similarly, a Sunni participant also held the opinion that, in case of any misfortune, she would consider herself as Pakistani irrespective of the fact that she was born in England. She said:

'I was born in England but my parents are from Pakistan, so if anything happens I am a Pakistani. Naturally you think I am a Pakistani.'

(UK min_maj 2; **Sunni 2)**

Other ethnic minority women interviewees also reflected on their often mixed cultural heritage. One Sunni woman stated:

'My origin is from India, so I am of Indian origin, yet I am a citizen, British Citizen.'

(UK min_maj 1; **Sunni 1)**

Being identified as British and as a Muslim was preferred by a Sunni participant who also acknowledged her Pakistani origins, she stated:

'[I am] A British Muslim. Although my parents are from Pakistan, my father was actually born here, my mother is from Pakistan, and I relate myself more to Britain and being a Muslim than being from Pakistan. Some of my friends from a similar age say British Pakistani Muslim or Pakistani Muslim, but I myself would class myself as British.'

(UK min_maj 5; **Sunni 5)**

The quotes from these interviewees demonstrate that, while they acknowledge their legal status as British, these ethnic minority women still preferred to be identified with their cultural heritage, suggesting that they have stronger bonds with their cultural heritage than with their current national and legal status as citizens of the UK. Others, however, acknowledged their cultural heritage from places outside Britain, but were keener to identify themselves with their status as British citizens than with their countries of origin.

These issues of belonging and national identity are not solely relevant for the interviewees with an immigrant background. The ethnic Norwegian respondents with a missionary background also describe similar feelings of belonging to different places.

> *Interviewer:* *'Do you feel Norwegian even if you grew up in another place?'*
> *Respondent:* *'That is a difficult question. More and more. Earlier I didn't. "What is it to be Norwegian?" I've thought. What is it? I'm not [the nationality of the country where she has lived] either. So I've used the term "third culture kids" which is used about those who have grown up abroad in different places. So who you are is a fusion of several things which results in something different – or if not something different … But perhaps you have a different belonging; it's not necessarily connected to where you are geographically.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 4; A4)

Similar to the quotes from ethnic minority women in the UK, this interview extract also problematises the notion of national identity. Even if you are a Norwegian citizen by law, your sense of belonging and personal identity is not necessarily connected to Norway or to being Norwegian.

Some participants, including both ethnic majority and minority women in the UK, did not only identify with the country they are living in (the UK), but also included their religion or race as important signifiers of their own national identities. They stated:

> *'I would say I was British, white British.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 2; **Pentecostal 2)**

> *'As far as I am concerned I am black British.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 4; **Pentecostal 4)**

Another included her religious identity:

> *'[I am] A British Muslim'.*
>
> (UK min_maj 5; **Sunni 5)**

In our study, nationality was largely constructed by the research participants on the basis of status as prescribed by law. However, the responses revealed a distinction between those who describe themselves as being British/Norwegian/Spanish by birth, and those who describe themselves as having become British/Norwegian/Spanish. The comments of the last group reveal that national

identity is not fixed but changeable, depending on context and circumstance. A plural construction of nationality was also identified, where participants included their race, ethnicity and religion in the construction of their national identity. This shows that 'what it means to be British/Spanish/Norwegian' in a multicultural society is a complex issue. Moreover, we observed differences in whether or not our research participants related their faiths to their national or ethnic identities. Some of the Muslim women in our study felt a need to emphasise both their religious and national identities, and referred to themselves as 'British Muslim' or 'Norwegian Muslim'. However, none of the Christian women used terms such as 'British Christian', 'Norwegian Christian' or 'Spanish Christian'. This could be a reflection of their privileged position of being part of the majority faith in the UK, Norway and Spain, respectively.

5.2.4 Inclusion and exclusion

The sense of belonging is connected to a sense of being included in a community, be it a large or a small scale community. When belonging is regarded as a dimension of citizenship, feeling socially included is important in fostering a deep sense of citizenship. Our research participants, in particular those with an immigrant background either through their own or their parents' migration, recounted stories of both inclusion and exclusion from society.

First we look at some who expressed feelings of belonging and inclusion. For example, one of the interviewees in Norway has parents from another country, but she herself was born and raised in Norway. She says that she feels Norwegian and explains it by saying, '[…] this is where I feel at home' (min_maj 5; C5). Later in the interview she says that she has a different background, but she feels included in the Norwegian society. Another interviewee explains that she came to Norway over 20 years ago, and says, 'From the first day we moved here, we felt that we were welcome.' (min_min 3; D3). She feels at home in Norway, not only in her country of origin, and she misses Norway when she goes back to visit her country of origin.

However, the stories in our data material are not only stories about inclusion. One of the Muslim interviewees with an immigrant background answers as follows when she is asked whether she feels included as a Norwegian citizen [*medborger*]:

> *'Well, not exactly. If I look around me at my work place or in the mosque or at home where I live, it's okay. But if I consider the society at large – let's say that I were to go to the Norwegian Parliament [the Storting] and state that "I'm Norwegian and I want to do this and this". Then - then I'm Pakistani. Then I'm a Pakistani woman. And they say: "You are a Pakistani woman". They don't say: "Here comes a Norwegian-Pakistani woman". The word – they don't want to stop using the word "minorities". […] The meaning of "minor" in English – minority means that there is a difference. I have stopped using that word in the lectures I've held. Instead I say "multicultural nationality". We have multinational children. […] They often say "utlendinger" [foreigners]. We're not "utlendinger"[foreigners], we're "innlendinger" (laughter).'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 4; C4)

This quote illustrates a feeling of being excluded from a notion of 'true' or full Norwegian citizenship. The interviewee differentiates between her neighbourhood community, her work place, and her religious community, which are all places where she feels included, and the Norwegian society at large, which sees her as a 'foreigner'. The Norwegian word '*utlending*' means to be a person from another country[88], a foreigner. The word '*innlending*' is the opposite of '*utlending*' and means that you have status as a Norwegian.[89] The word 'foreigner' means to be a visitor, a stranger, and it gives associations to being an outsider. It is the opposite of being included as a 'fellow citizen' (*medborger)* and to belong to the Norwegian society. The interviewee's identity as a Norwegian-Pakistani woman, and her children as multicultural ,is not acknowledged by the Norwegian society. In her opinion, she is still viewed as just Pakistani, as a 'foreigner'. Later in the interview, she describes how it still hurts when people say 'foreigners'. By using the word '*innlending*', which is not often used in Norwegian, the interviewee emphasises that she wants to be acknowledged as an insider in the Norwegian society; as an equal and fellow citizen.

The interviewee also addresses the use of the term 'minority', a term which is increasingly used both in Norwegian media and academia. In her opinion, the word

[88] http://www.ordnett.no/ordbok.html?search=utlending&publications=23 [accessed 10 September 2010].
[89] http://www.ordnett.no/ordbok.html?search=innlending&search_type=&publications=23 [accessed 10 September 2010].

‘minority’ in English is associated with ‘difference’. This can be interpreted as a way of saying that people who are labelled ‘minorities’ are also seen as ‘minor’ in the meaning that they are less worth than the ‘majority’, or that they are like children, not fully adults.

An ethnic majority (white) interviewee from the UK, on the other hand, highlighted how upholding what she perceived to be her country’s tradition could be challenging in relation to immigration. She cautioned against upholding traditions in ways which would seem to exclude and discriminate against new groups of people who have migrated to her country:

> *‘[B]ut also, I suppose, I would say upholding traditions of your country, but I think that can be a dangerous one because that is a sort of changing thing, and as new groups come in and join the country, you know, you have to be careful that you are not actually discriminating against those groups or excluding them in some way. So I think that although that is, on the face of it, part of being a citizen, I think you have to be a bit careful about it and make sure, as I said, that you are, because you are not being a good citizen if you are excluding some group that is in your country are you.’*
>
> (UK maj_maj 6; **Anglican 6)**

Her comment against the discrimination of ethnic minority groups demonstrates an insight into how majority groups can perpetuate their own privilege through exclusionary practices. They also highlight an argument for ‘ethnic citizenship’ which Nyhagen Predelli et al. (2009) apply tentatively as a theoretical and empirical concept to demands for justice and a new set of anti-racist and anti-discrimination policies.

It is evident that the interviewees experience citizenship on different levels or in different areas of their lives; from the local neighbourhood to the ‘society at large’, and also in a more global context when they talk about belonging to different countries. The sense of belonging and recognition differs in these various contexts. Places like the neighbourhood community, the workplace and the mosque are described as being like ‘pockets’ in society where they are included, whereas the larger society may at times be experienced as more exclusionary.

5.2.5 'A Good Citizen'

The interviewees were asked what they considered to be 'a good citizen', and all the answers were strikingly similar in all four groups across the three countries we have conducted case-studies in. The answers were related to tolerance and respect, love and care, and contributing to a better community with your fellow citizens.

Tolerance and respect

> *'First of all you have to respect other people and understand other people. And you have to get knowledge. […]My neighbour, it doesn't matter if that person is Norwegian or from a different country, it doesn't matter. What I see is him or her as a human being. Only as a human being.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 2; D2)

According to this interviewee, a 'good citizen' is a person who has respect for other people and who shows understanding. Moreover, one has to view other people as equal human beings regardless of their gender, nationality or religion. Later in the interview, the respondent also emphasises care for other people and a responsibility to 'guide' other people who are doing 'bad things'. She argues that one has an obligation to help other people and not to look the other way. One cannot decide over other people, but try to guide that person to do the right thing and talk to him or her as a friend. She refers to Allah who would not approve of someone who looked the other way and refused to help others.

Several of the interviewees also specifically mention respect and tolerance for each others' religious beliefs:

> *'Citizenship [medborgerskap] to me is the same as human compassion. We are all human beings and we have responsibilities, for instance to follow the rules regarding crossing a street. […] It is the same for all other rules; one has to respect those rules – as long as one has the freedom to practice your religious rituals, religious prayer and religious duties. So that we can pray here, build a mosque, be together on Fridays, and there is not hindrance. Likewise it is also important for me to respect the other people who live here, also those without a religion.'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 3; C3)

This interviewee underlines respect for common rules and regulations, and also mutual respect for each others' religious beliefs, including those who do not have a religion. Citizens should obey the same rules, but also give each other freedom and

space to have different beliefs. Similarly, a Catholic woman in Spain argued that anyone, regardless of their faith, can be a good citizen:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 2; Maj_Maj_02)

Love and care

> *'To live in a relationship, the ability to relate to others, the ability to love your neighbour as yourself [elske din neste som deg selv]. Sometimes you give, other times you receive. It is the message of love. Love your neighbour as yourself.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

> *'I guess it means to care about others, like if they are experiencing a difficult time, if they're ill and so forth. To care. [...] And to be together despite different faiths.'*
>
> (Norway maj-min 1; B1)

> *'To care about other people. To cooperate in order to achieve the best goals in a society, to pull society forward. Or to push society forward … and to view everybody as equals, maybe. [...] To look inside the person. In order to live a better life, the best possible life in a society.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 1; D1)

The first quote above refers to the Christian notion of caring for others [*kristen nestekjærlighet*]; 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself'. The same emphasis on love and care for other people is a common theme in all the interviews in all four religious groups in all three countries. The women in our data material underline the importance of seeing other people as equals – regardless of different religious faiths and so forth.

A Catholic woman in Spain offers an example of how Christian interviewees in Spain emphasised citizenship as related to commitment to others, generosity, and to respect and 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.'

(Spain maj_maj 1; Maj_Maj_01)

The quote above imparts that a notion of selflessness, e.g. to 'put other people['s interests] before yourself [your own interests]' is viewed as central to being a good citizen. Similarly, a Pentecostal participant from Spain talked about citizenship 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. [It is] as simple as that. If you apply that to all contexts and situations then things would really work.'

(Spain maj_min 1; Min_Maj_01)

Contribute to a better community with your fellow citizens

'[…] It's not just about you as an individual, but rather to see yourself in a context. [...] That you want to contribute. [...] When you speak about the Norwegian dugnadsånd [positive attitude to voluntary community work]. I participated in a dugnad [voluntary community work] this weekend, and I've noticed that people contribute with what they know and what they have, even if it's just being present and being sociable and talk. [...] But it's both about being able to and wanting to be a part. I do understand that those who are not able to participate have good reasons why they don't. But in a way it is the responsibility of society to help them to be able to take that citizenship [ta det medborgerskapet]. So I'm thinking that it's not only an individual responsibility to be able to do that, but it is an ideal then that each person immediately would want to contribute.'

(Norway maj_maj 6; A6)

'[A good citizen] is a human being who flourishes [blomstrer] with all the gifts that are immanent in that human being, and who finds the place where one is best fitted. A person who's allowed to flourish, is a person who can contribute the most to community. […] It's a saying; "God's glory is a human being" and I truly believe that.'

(Norway maj_maj 1;A1)

The two quotes above impart a notion of 'active citizenship' through community participation. In particular, participation in local voluntary work is seen as important, as this is presented as a positive tradition in Norwegian society. 'Good citizenship' entails caring for and contributing to society, and not only caring about oneself, is the message imparted from these quotes. The following fragment reflects the views of a Catholic participant from Spain:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain Maj_maj 4; Maj_Maj_04)

The first part of her testimony places stress on respect for laws, but there is also a clear reference to participation as part and parcel of being a good citizen. Even though she herself is not participating that much, she upholds a 'participative orientation' as the ideal for a good citizen.

According to the interviewees, participation and contribution to a community is an obligation, or at least something one should strive towards. The first quote above refers to '*dugnadsånd'* ('community spirit) which is a Norwegian word specifically related to direct participation in voluntary work, usually in your neighbourhood and your local community. People can contribute in different ways based on their various abilities.

> *'You need to take responsibility, a common responsibility. [...] To be in a dialogue with one another. [...] You are not only a "citizen" [borger], you are a "citizen"[fellow citizen; medborger], you are part of a larger system. So it's not just you and your life; we all have to function together.'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 1; C1)

This quote addresses the inter-relational aspect of citizenship and the difference between the concept of 'citizen' in the legal sense of the term and that of being a 'fellow citizen' forming part of a community or society.

The word 'dialogue' is used in the quote immediately above, and other interviewees also mention communication between people as a condition for a good society. One interviewee says that lack of good communication can lead to misunderstandings

and a distance between people. She especially mentions relations between non-Muslims and Muslims in Norway, and she argues that in order to close the gap, there is a need for dialogue and to get to know each other. Otherwise there will be misunderstandings and this will lead to problems on a societal level. The interviewee mentions stereotypical images of Muslim men and women; for instance, that she wears a hijab, and some people might assume that she is subordinate to her husband, while in fact she has always been active in society, in different organisations, and has worked for gender equality and worked to abolish domestic violence and so on.

To summarise: as 'a good citizen' you should see yourself as part of a bigger picture, not put yourself in the centre at all times; contribute and take responsibility for other people on all levels in society. It also implies treating others as equals and to involve oneself in dialogue with other people.

5.3 Religious citizenship

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 (see Chapter 2 of this Working Paper); 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). In our project we were interested in how the notion of religious citizenship might be understood by religious women. In response to the question 'Do you think it makes sense to talk about citizenship in the religious arena? Why/why not?', some participants in our study questioned the appropriateness of bringing the two concepts, citizenship and religion, together. Others argued that some conditions have to be met before the two concepts could be fruitfully linked. Although some did not immediately associate the notion of citizenship with religion, many of our research participants argued that it is relevant to discuss religious citizenship due to Biblical and Qur'anic prescriptions about what it means to be 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 for 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 1; Maj_Min_01)

The citation above illustrates how Muslim interviewees connect Islam and citizenship. Behaviour which demonstrate empathy with and obligations to others are viewed as required by 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 such as prayers are not enough. Indeed, the five pillars of Islam include *zakat* or charity towards the poor as a basic obligation, together with a recital of the Muslim profession of faith, five ritual prayers a day, fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).

The discussion above is interesting, however, because what non-Muslims may perceive as key to the Islamic faith for women - wearing the veil, adhering to Ramadan, praying five times a day - does not appear to carry the same weight for all the Muslim participants in our 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 may be secondary. As the quote above indicates, for some Muslims it is useless to follow instructions about how many times one should pray if one is not also a good person and a good citizen. Another Sunni participant in Spain talked in similar ways about being a good Muslim and a good citizen:

> *'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 price […] People thought the house was not worth that much. He [the Prophet] said, I am not selling the house, I am selling my neighbour.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; 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 highlights is that one needs to show respect no matter who one's '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. For the Muslim woman quoted below, citizenship is also deeply connected with Islam. Citizenship as involvement, tolerance, and adherence to social norms is not seen as voluntary, but as obligatory, in Islam.

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

The interviewee states that a good Muslim does not choose to behave as a good citizen, he/she is supposed to, is expected to, and 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2;Maj_Min_02)

It is interesting how citizenship is represented as contextual: 'citizenship, here, even though I am not Spanish'. In a way this research participant 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, insofar 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 references 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 Islam and Muslims (e.g., religious Islamic law comes first). Given the universalistic-orientation of Islam it is important that there are explicit norms about accepting cultural differences. Although the previous quote points in 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 3;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, the participant quoted below makes an explicit connection between Islam and citizenship:

> *'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 no one asks questions or demands explanations about what you did before.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 5; 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 if you have 'strayed away' from Islam, you can rediscover Islam in a new context, in the country you have migrated to.

Christian respondents in Spain did not necessarily think that all religious people are good citizens, but they conveyed the notion than in order to be 'a good Catholic' or 'a good Evangelical' (Pentecostal), you ought to be a good citizen. For example, when asked whether it made sense to talk about religious citizenship, two Catholic participants said:

> *'No … To be a good person a person needs not be Christian. I know a lot of good people who are not Christian.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 2; Maj_Maj_02)

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain, maj_maj 4; Maj_Maj_04)

Similar views are expressed by this Evangelical woman in Spain:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 3; Min_Maj_03)

These Christian participants in Spain 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. The third quote above also indicates that citizenship is viewed as grounded in religious mandates such as loving God and his creation (i.e., other fellow human beings). Insofar as we are 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.'

(Spain maj_min 2; Min_Maj_02)

She argues that even though she cannot share 'the lifestyle' of people of other religious faiths than her own, she does not want to reject them because she thinks that God mandates her to love her fellow beings. Despite her not wanting to reject those who do not share her faith, she does seem to want them to change their faith and convert to Christianity. She prays that non-believers will eventually embrace 'the right religion' (Christianity). This quote also gives an example of how religion offers mechanisms for peaceful coexistence based on very general abstract concepts (e.g., we're all God's creatures).

In Norway, the term 'religious citizenship' was a new term for our respondents; however, they all thought it made sense to include religion in a citizenship terminology. The term 'religious citizenship' also addresses the interviewees' sense of belonging to a religious community in particular, and they expressed what that meant to them. Earlier in this chapter we have written about the sense of feeling at home in a religious community, and also to be part of a world-wide religious community.

'I think it's meaningless that a secular society in a way ignores religion completely […]. If one should think about a multicultural society, ideally one should accept the differences instead of ignoring them. […] Well, if you ignore that, it's like you're kind of disrespectful. It's like you try to hide that part of people's identity.'

(Norway min_min 4; D4)

'I think it would be strange not to include [religious citizenship in the definition of citizenship]. When you mention political, economical, and familial, it is only natural for me to think about the religious.'

(Norway, maj_maj 6; A6)

These quotes illustrate a view of religion as something deeply integrated in one's life; as a part of one's identity. Another interviewee explains how 'Islam is a way of life'

and that your values and the way you behave is influenced by your religion (min_min 5; C5). This view of religion as an essential part of one's life is shared by all of our interviewees in all three countries.

Based on these findings in our research project it might seem strange to address 'citizenship' as a more general term and 'religious citizenship' as separate issues like we initially did in our interview guide. To be 'a good citizen' and 'a good Christian' or 'a good Muslim' is basically the same for our interviewees; these aspects are intertwined. As discussed previously in this chapter, being 'a good Christian' or 'a good Muslim' includes showing love and care, respect and tolerance for each other. Some of the interviewees also connected these things particularly to being religious:

> *'[…] Well, I don't want to categorise ['sette ting i bås'], but on average I would think that people in a religious setting are perhaps more inclined to take responsibility for their surroundings. And especially the way things have become here in Norway; now it's all about "because I deserve it", it's constantly "me" in the center. And I think that it's not that easy to get trapped in all that for those who are members of a religious community. […] Most religions are really about caring for other people. […]'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 2; B2)

According to this interviewee, the Norwegian society has become increasingly egoistic; everything centers on the individual. However, the respondent thinks that religious people can more easily resist this and be a counterweight to such a development in society because they allegedly have a religious platform where care and love for fellow human beings is the central virtue.

Participants in the UK, including both Christian and Muslim women, argued that it is relevant to talk about 'religious citizenship' as both the Qur'an and the Bible offer prescriptions about how to be a good citizen. For example, a Pentecostal argued that if citizenship is defined as contributing to society, then it is relevant to discuss religion in relation to citizenship. She said:

> *'The Bible talks about citizenship, it calls us citizens of heaven. Citizens of heaven even though we are living on the Earth. I think it depends on your definition of citizenship. If citizenship is being a part of and making a contribution to, then yes.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 4; **Pentecostal 4)**

So contributing to society as a religious person justifies a discussion of religious citizenship. She also highlights the understanding of religious citizenship as both other-worldly (heaven), and this-worldly (here on Earth).

Similarly, an Anglican participant mentioned that being a responsible citizen is a requirement in the Bible, she argued:

> *'Yes I think so, […] in the Bible, Paul tells us to be responsible citizens and do what you are supposed to do. So yes, from that point of view […] Yes, that we should be responsible citizens, it is part of being a Christian that as well as obviously believing in God you should be equally responsible citizens. The second commandment is to love thy neighbour as thyself, and part of doing that is obviously being a responsible citizen and looking out for your neighbour and doing the right things, so yes, I think being a Christian does mean you have to be a responsible citizen.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 4; **Anglican 4)**

She is suggesting that being Christian necessitates that one becomes a responsible citizen; thus, to her, religion and citizenship are intertwined, as Christianity prescribes what a citizen should do. Likewise, Islam was also said to provide a guide for citizens. One Shia participant explained:

> *'Islam has guidelines for citizenship, for working, for studying, for bringing up your babies, for everything. For many areas of your private life it has many guidelines.'*
>
> (UK min_min 1; **Shia 1)**

Similar to interviewees quoted earlier, this woman represents Islam as a prescriptive religion which offers specific guidelines for everyday life. Another Shia woman also said:

> *'Citizenship is giving you the right, you can live in any country you want to, and Islam says you follow where you live, the rules and regulation of where you live. So you need to respect those countries' rules and regulations. Islam strictly tells us these sorts of things. And if you are living in a Christian country you need to follow those rules, the country's rules and regulations.'*
>
> (UK min_min 3; **Shia 3)**

She re-emphasises the religious prescriptions provided in the Qur'an for the respect of laws in a given country. The interviewees' comments indicate that in both books, the Bible and the Qur'an, there are prescriptive rules for the behaviour of citizens, thus for them it is relevant to conceptualise citizenship in religious terms.

'Religious citizenship' – an inclusive term?

> *'It [religious citizenship] is a new term for me. […] It makes sense. […] When I hear that term [religious citizenship] it includes all religions. […]'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3;A3)

> *'I believe in God and that unites all the large worldwide religions; Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. So we see that it is a lot in common, so in a way I identify with Christians and Jews in the same way as I identify with Muslims. So in a way it is a common religion.'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 1; C1))

> *'I can tell you how it was in the time of the Prophet. In my opinion that's the way it should be nowadays as well. [...] The Prophet came to tell people about Islam, right, but there were people who were following Jesus, and Moses, and they were allowed to continue to have their religion, they didn't have to become Muslims. In the time of the Prophet they lived as Jews and Christians. So Muslims were told to leave them alone because they had their own religion. If they don't want to convert that's their call. Unless of course they fought against Islam, then it was allowed to fight back. So in my opinion we should all live together in a society, that's religious citizenship. And even if you're not religious.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 1; D1)

> *'I am very ecumenical. I mean that there is one Church. The things that separate us are very insignificant. It is one God, one Church. […] The foundation for the Christian denomination [trosretning] is the salvation [frelsen]. When it comes to Islam for instance, that is a different denomination [trosretning]. […] So that is fundamentally different. I mean that the key to God goes through Jesus. So if you were to talk about a common church, that would include those who have Jesus as an intermediary to God. But on the other side, I respect those who have a different view. […]'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 4; B4)

The quotes above indicate that 'religious citizenship' at least could include the respect for other religious beliefs. However, the interviewees differ in their responses regarding who they would include in the 'religious community' they are religious citizens of.

The first quote above illustrates an inclusive view of 'religious citizenship', namely a view where all religions are included. The second quote also highlights the commonalities between the worldwide faiths. The third quote emphasises respect for each other's religious beliefs and that religious citizenship should mean that everyone can live together in peace regardless of religious affiliation. The fourth

quote, first and foremost, emphasises the ecumenical community and the similarities between the different Christian denominations; to be precise, the salvation through Jesus. This makes the Christian faith very different from Islam. However, the interviewee underlines that Christians and Muslims should respect each others' religions.

This could, of course, mean that they talk about religious communities on different levels.

> *'[…] We meet, because we are human beings and we want to meet as human beings. But maybe the religious dimension, if I can use that word, can strengthen something. Maybe. Or it can create a feeling of alienation. […]'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 4; A4)

One interviewee explains that a religious belief, whether you are a Christian, a Hindu or a Muslim, can provide a common platform of faith from which you can obtain mutual respect and understanding. In her experience, some Hindus or Muslims may wish to be with Christians rather than with secular Norwegians because the Christians actually have religious beliefs. Another interviewee also mentions the possibility to find a common ethnic and moral ground, despite differences in religious beliefs. However, coming from different religious backgrounds can also lead to alienation, according to the quote above.

Many of the Christian participants in our UK study shared the view that religious citizenship breaks down barriers, especially national boundaries. Their responses suggest that religious citizenship might render legal status within a country less important than a shared sense of belonging to a community of believers. One UK Pentecostal argued that nation-states have introduced boundaries between people who initially are equal before God:

> *'I think [the nation-state] has separated people OK and I think people need to see people, even Christians have to answer to themselves. Everybody needs to come out of their box and see things the way God sees them. […] to me we need to, I mean for me I have learned quite a lot. We need to come out of the box and really, to love other people, you need to see the way God sees them, and that is very, very important. And for me, because I work with people from different backgrounds, […]. I see them as people, you know, and who are precious to God.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 1; **Pentecostal 1)**

She suggests that people should overcome boundaries created by differences, as all are equal before God. In the view of this interviewee, religious citizenship implies equality in the sense that God values all human beings equally. An Anglican participant also argued that religious faith was linked with good citizenship. She stated:

> *'I think it is because my Christian faith, again going back to understanding it is God's will for people to have life and life in its fullness, [...] means that I think everyone needs to be a part of that and to do their bit for everybody to flourish, for everybody to have fullness of life. So I think the two are hand in hand, people in faith have got to have a care about good citizenship, and that this society is working and working for all; and so yes.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 3; **Anglican 3)**

Her position suggests that religious citizenship might introduce more neighbourliness and social commitments within communities. A UK Shia participant, on the other hand, tried to explain the relevance of religion to citizenship, and the priority religion is accorded, through using the concept of water:

> *'Yes I think it is, as I told you previously, I think religion is like water moving through different countries and each country is different, is like a different container and it takes the shape of that different container. But the water is the same but sometimes it is very cold so it freezes, [and] somewhere [it is] very hot you know. So it is like, I think religion is more, it is like you know.'*
>
> (UK min_min 6; **Shia 6)**

She suggests that irrespective of different faiths, religion can bind people together across geographical and national boundaries. Another participant made links between her Christian faith, obeying secular laws, and having an emotional attachment to where you live. She argued:

> *'Yes and no. Yes because if we go by what I defined it as before, as living by the laws of the land and having a passion for where you live, then if you apply that to religion then it is living by, and Christianity, it is living by what the Bible teaches and having a passion for that isn't it, so yes in that sense. But no in a sense that if you say citizenship in the way that it has been used more of late, you have to earn it you know, you have to do something to achieve it. For example in Britain […] you have to earn it, whereas with Christianity I believe you don't have to earn it, you just have to ask forgiveness and believe in God. So no in that sense.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 3; **Pentecostal 3)**

She highlights challenges to the notion of equal religious citizenship by referring to limitations that may be produced by formal citizenship rules. The process of becoming a Christian does not depend on one's immigration status within a country, and in this sense Christian religious citizenship is open to all. Formal, legal citizenship status, on the other hand, is non-inclusive, in that it cannot be obtained by all.

A question was also raised in terms of whether the concept of religious citizenship would create divisions between communities or bring different religious communities together. One Sunni participant argued:

> *'Only if it helps us to understand each other. I think if you are going to use it to drive wedges between communities then no. But if it helps you to gain better understanding of each other's communities then, yes, include it. But, you know, at the end of the day we are all striving to be better citizens, or that is what we should be doing, and, you know, if we are from different cultures and different backgrounds, if we don't know enough about each other to help us to achieve that aim, then perhaps we should include some sort of, I don't know, educational programme or whatever to do that. But as I say, there is so much negativity that goes in to these things and I really don't think it is necessary. I think there is almost like a hidden agenda by the media and the Government, you know, why stir up all this negativity.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 4; **Sunni 4)**

She is reflecting on the presence of different cultures, religions and ethnic groups in the UK, and how a holistic concept of religious citizenship could be achieved in a multi-faith country. The dilemma of multi-faith was also raised by a Shia participant who argued that religious citizenship was relevant as long as individuals are not forced to take up a particular religion and both religions, Christianity and Islam, are regarded with equal values. She was of the view that:

> *'They can be, as long as it is not forceful you know. You can just show who you are, be a good person and then if they think, oh well, if she is a Muslim and she can be good. That is what I am saying you know, you are a good person, not just Islam is wonderful, Islam is this, because then from what you see Islam OK can be good, but then Christianity is good as well because they are all God's you know, children. […] so they can't put down Christianity to say Islam is better. They have their beliefs, a lot of it is exactly the same stuff, except you know who has put extra bits. So if, Islam to me, it is important to be a good person and I think with that I can show myself and Islam.'*
>
> (UK min_min 5; **Shia 5)**

She is thus suggesting, like many other of our interviewees, that people of different faiths, including Christians and Muslims, can be good citizens. Her comments could be a result of the negative portrayal of Muslim communities after the 9/11 attacks in New York, or anxiety over Christianity perhaps being suggested as a 'better faith' for 'good' people. Similar to the Sunni participant quoted before, she reflects on the negative image of Muslims carried by the media. Nevertheless, some Muslim participants in our study shared the view that the two concepts, religion and citizenship, were not so easily linked due to a potential to create further differences in status. One Sunni participant argued that religious citizenship might introduce social classes based on a criterion of how committed people are to their faith. She primarily associated citizenship, including religious citizenship, with status:

> *'Not, well again I don't believe in that, because in religion I don't think you can make the citizenship, because you have got so many different believers and the different faiths and the different levels. Because as I said, sometimes I am so tired and I fall asleep and I miss my prayer, but there are people, no matter what happens they don't miss the prayer at all, and there are people that their time, it goes more in prayers than in running their life, or going out for living. So again, those are three different levels, and what citizenship are you going to give to them, low-class, middle-class, higher-class. So in religion I don't think citizenship makes any difference, you know.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 3; **Sunni 3)**

So, she conceptualises citizenship, including religious citizenship, as a notion that creates differences in status between different people.

While some of the participants' discourse on religious citizenship focused on how religion might be interpreted in terms of a legal definition of citizenship, other responses dwelt, as we have seen, mostly on participation and belonging. Some interviewees immediately thought about legal status in connection with the term 'religious citizenship'. They seemed to invoke their regular conception of citizenship as legal *status*, and when applied to the religious sphere they seem to associate citizenship with the possibility that unequal in status could be accorded to different religious communities, such that one religious faith would have a higher status or be seen as 'superior to', or 'better than', another faith. Such an inequality in status was clearly disliked by our participants. Research participants were also concerned with how people of different religions perceive each other in terms of participation and belonging. For example, the notion 'religious citizenship' was thought of in more

inclusive terms in the sense that all religious believers (regardless of whether they are Christian or Muslim) were perceived to be united in a shared community of faith. Interestingly, our respondents do not seem to think of religious citizenship in the form of equal rights for members of various religious communities. This could be associated with the fact that none of the participants mentioned that they have ever been denied the opportunity to participate in any religious activity. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a sense amongst our participants that followers of the Christian faith, or Christian communities, are accorded more rights than followers of the Muslim faith, or Muslim communities. It seems that the interviewees also take for granted, and accept, the fact that Christianity has a special status as the 'official religion' of Norway, Spain and the UK. However, it could also be that this issue was silenced, or not talked about, simply because we did not raise it as a question in our interviews.

5.4 Is religion represented as a resource or as a barrier (or both) to citizenship as practice?

In this section we ask whether religion is represented to be a resource or a barrier (or both) to citizenship as practice, and we will address experiences of inclusion and exclusion. The interviewees from all four religious groups talk about religion as a resource in quite similar ways. However, when they talk about barriers there are more differences between the Christian and the Muslim respondents. The minority position as being part of an 'ethnic minority' and also the majority society's view of Muslims in general are issues which are articulated. The Muslim women focus more on how the larger society portrays Muslims, whereas the Christian women focus both on how the secular society treats religious people and on internal restrictions in their religious communities. In this section we focus more in-depth on how research participants in Norway talked about religion as a resource or as a barrier to citizenship as practice.

Religion as a resource to citizenship as practice

> *'My religion encourages me to contribute in society and to do good […].'*
> (Norway min_maj 5; C5)

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, and in the previous chapter on identity, both identity and the sense of belonging are central aspects of religious citizenship. When our respondents were asked in what way religion could be a resource to citizenship in practice, they emphasise belonging to a religious community as a base in life and a source of self-confidence. They also stress that religion guides you to become a better person and gives you direction in life. The Muslim women especially, emphasise how the Qur'an tells them what do and how to behave in certain situations. However, the answers did not vary much across the four different religious communities.

> *'Wherever you travel in the world, you can go into a church and be a part of a community. […]'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

Several of the interviewees highlight the belonging to a religious community, not only the local church or mosque, but also a world-wide religious community.

> *'[…] And I think that belonging to a Church that is something bigger than me – also in a worldwide context – was very important for me earlier. But also now, that I get to be part of this is a very important part of my belonging, my sense of belonging as a citizen [medborger] in the society where I am now.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 4; A4)

One of the interviewees with a background as a missionary child describes how she felt like she was an insider in the country where she grew up, but she looked different and everyone else defined her as different. When she came back to Norway she looked like everyone else, but she felt different. She did not have the same experiences and the same references. However, her Christian faith has been a constant part of her life and when she came back to Norway she felt that she also belonged in a Norwegian Christian setting. Within the congregation she has felt included and has had the sense of belonging that she needed especially when she was in her adolescence.

> *'[…] I don't know what it is like to live without being part of a congregation, because I always have, but for me, belonging to a congregation or a Christian community, in particular in times of crisis, I have experienced that it is in no way indifferent. There are people who care, almost like being part of a family of brothers and sisters.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

Belonging to a religious community is also experienced as positive in a time of crisis. Several of the interviewees describe how much they appreciate the support from others both locally and internationally, for instance during illness in the family.

> *'[…] one has a standpoint where one feels safe. And that makes, yes, one stands more firmly. It gives some directions for your life. In that way it has had an enormous importance. […]'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 2; B2)

To be included in a religious community provides a sense of belonging and security. In the quote above, this belonging is described as a solid base in life that gives direction.

> *'[…] I don't know whether it has got to do with the congregation or not, but I've always been like that […], I've always been active, I've been active in youth work, in Girl Scouts, leader of the school team, well, I've always been that kind of person. Whether that has something to do with – it can have something to do with the congregation, that you have a security in a community. It can be. That you are used to see people who speak – I've attended meetings since I was a little girl, right, and I've related to Sunday school teachers who have a point of view and who dare to speak about it. So we were encouraged to say things, especially there. It might have something to do with it, yes, I think so.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 4; B4)

> *'What I've learned there [in the girls' group in the mosque] has helped me in other parts of my life as well; to work in a group, teamwork. It has been very rewarding, I've received much confidence. I've been there and talked in front of people, made suggestions, cooperated with people, right? I feel that it has built up my self-confidence as well, and it has helped me when I'm doing other things; like schoolwork, and about working in a group […]'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 5; C5)

Interviewees from different religious communities describe how their participation within the religious community has helped them in other parts of society as well. The belonging to a religious community has provided them with a feeling of security and self-confidence. Moreover, the interviewees explain how their participation at Sunday school and at various meetings or groups from an early age has encouraged them to speak in front of a group of people and also to work together in groups.

One interviewee said that she has learned many social skills by being a member of a religious community. Ever since she was a child she has been accustomed to being around other people in large social gatherings, to meet people of all age groups, and

to be sociable. She has also been used to speak from the platform in her congregation in front of many people, and this has helped her to be able to speak in front of people in other places as well.

Some of the interviewees also mention the leader training that they have been given within their religious community. One interviewee from the Pentecostal movement said that she grew up in a large congregation and she has been given opportunities that perhaps smaller congregations cannot provide. She has been entrusted with important leadership tasks in her congregation. Next we examine how research participants in Norway talk about religion as a barrier to citizenship as practice.

Religion as a barrier to citizenship as practice

> *'[…] I am Norwegian, but in the kind of public debate recently you become… […] you're not fully Norwegian, you're a 'Muslim Norwegian', and it's kind of a third category. Yes. But I feel that we, who are sort of Norwegian Muslims, we have a responsibility, not just towards other Muslims in the younger generation, but also towards the society at large. I feel that if it exists, this false image of Islam and Muslims, it's largely our responsibility to correct this image.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 4; D4)

Issues of barriers and exclusion brought up some similarities between the four religious groups in our data material, for instance, experiences of being a minority in a secular society. However, differences between the Christian and the Muslim respondents were also evident. The quote above illustrates the feeling of being a 'Muslim Norwegian', in the meaning of not being acknowledged as fully Norwegian, and points to a double minority position as being part of an 'ethnic minority' and also being part of a stigmatised religious group. Because of these differences we first examine the Christian group of respondents, and then the Muslim group of respondents, in terms of whether religion is identified as a barrier to citizenship as practice. Here, we address barriers and feelings of exclusion experienced by the respondents which are due to prejudice and stigmatisation by the Norwegian society at large, but also internal restrictions or constraints within the various religious communities. The interviewees differentiate between inclusion and exclusion on different levels; they can, for instance, feel included in the local community and at work, but feel excluded by the Norwegian 'society at large'. Here we mainly focus on

barriers with regards to participation in society, but also experiences connected to feelings of exclusion and lack of recognition.

Christian respondents in Norway on religion as a barrier to citizenship as practice

> *'[…] An experience when I was younger and in high school, was that … it was not said in that many words, but it was kind of unsaid that you shouldn't flag your identity as a Christian. It was not a good idea. We understood that quite quickly.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 4; A4)

> *'[…] Many Christian children at school are very careful about saying that they are Christians. They keep their faith as a secret. I know that from my own experience. They feel very lonely.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 3; A3)

These quotes illustrate an experience of being a minority as a Christian in the Norwegian society – a minority in relation to what is perceived as the secular majority. The quotes are from two interviewees from the Church of Norway, which we have labeled a majority group in our data material. However, the feeling of being a minority as a Christian is evident. One of the interviewees talks about an 'identity as a Christian'. Being a 'personal Christian' and having an 'identity as a Christian' is experienced as being very different from the majority of the white Norwegian population who either have secular beliefs or are passive members of the Church of Norway. Some of the interviewees talk about a feeling of being alone and being part of a small minority in the Norwegian society when they grew up.

One of the interviewees from the Church of Norway points to the debate about Muslims and their religious rights. However, in her view, Christian children have the same experience. She claims that it is easier for secular Norwegians to accept Muslims who pray and fast during Ramadan than to accept Christian children who say that they pray or believe in Jesus.

Pentecostal participants from Norway talked about their experiences of people outside the Pentecostal movement having met them with scepticism and prejudice:

> *'You can experience that people think you are strange because you're a Pentecostal because – I think it's because people don't know what it is. Ignorance. And it's the same with immigrants; we think that they are strange and we distance ourselves, but maybe it's ignorance which is the main reason.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 2; B2)

> *'To be a Pentecostal, it was to be something very strange. Earlier it was viewed as very strange, people thought that we climbed in our curtains (laughter) and did all kinds of weird things.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min; B3)

One of the older women in the Pentecostal congregation remembers the Dissenter law [*Dissenterloven*][90] when she started working as a teacher. She was, for instance, not allowed to teach Christianity, and she felt sidelined as a Pentecostal. According to the interviewee, it was an important shift when that law was abolished in 1969. The women from the Pentecostal movement also addressed internal restrictions and barriers in their congregation:

> *'[…] It has been safe, obviously, you knew where you belonged. You, you were within a system – that's maybe a slightly wrong word, but you are within a relation where you could feel at home. As long as you followed the prevailing rules.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 3; B3)

This quote emphasises the positive aspects of belonging to a religious community, but it also points to aspects of social control within the community. The interviewee describes the congregation as a restricted and close-knit community which sometimes can feel 'narrow'. One of the interviewees recalls when she was young and had the feeling that everybody watched what she was doing; she had to be loyal to the congregation, and never disagree with the preacher. Several of the interviewees thought it was difficult to be a part of the Pentecostal movement when they were teenagers. Most of our respondents in this category are older women, and they claim that the difference between Pentecostal youth and other youth was

[90] The Dissenter law from 1845 affected persons who were Christians but not members of the State Church of Norway (http://fagsider.org/kirkehistorie/lover/1845_dissenterloven.htm). The law provided Christians outside the State Church religious freedom and the right to organise. However, they were not allowed to teach Christianity in schools.

bigger when they were young. One interviewee states; 'it was a bit scary to be among others when we were teenagers' (maj_min 2; B2). As a teenager she was not allowed to dance or drink alcohol and she never attended parties, which made her different from other teenagers. According to another interviewee, a few generations back many things were perceived as sinful within the Pentecostal movement; it was a sin to get a perm, or to go to the school theatre. It was not allowed to have friends outside the congregation. She rebelled against the congregation when she was younger, but she never turned against Christianity. She rebelled against a pattern which everyone was supposed to fit into. The interviewee remembers that she and her brothers were not allowed to do sports. She was only allowed to be a Girl Scout because she could wear a dress.
According to the interviewees, many things have changed in the Pentecostal movement since they grew up:

> *'[…] We cannot live 30 years back in time. We actually have to live – we are a part of the world we live in – and we can't demand that our children should be very different from other children.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 2; B2)

The interviewees contrast their childhood and youth with the upbringing of their own children, and they all emphasise the vast change. One interviewee describes her own teenage children as 'more free' (maj_min 2; B2). They socialise with others outside the Pentecostal movement. The interviewees say that their children do not have the same restrictions regarding dancing and going to the movies, the theatre or to do sports.

One of the interviewees has distanced herself more and more from the Pentecostal movement over the years, but is still a member. Earlier, Pentecostal girls had to dress in a certain way, and that made them very visible and different from other youth. This has changed, however, she argues that the movement is still very preacher-dominated, and the members are more or less being told 'this is what you are supposed to mean' (maj_min 3; B3).

Some of the interviewees from the Pentecostal movement address the 'image of perfectness' ['*perfektstempel*']. As a Christian you were not supposed to have problems:

> *'[…] But I do think there are many successful families. […] And I remember when people started to get divorces, and that was not fully accepted. So we had some children, who came every other weekend, and I tried to get them together on Saturdays, but it was difficult to mix those children with the children from the so-called large successful families.'*
>
> (Norway maj_min 4; B4)

This quote describes the Pentecostal congregation as a quite closed community which consisted of large extended families and people who married each other within the congregation. It was expected that Christians were 'the successful people' and it was difficult to acknowledge that everything is not perfect. It used to be hard for children of divorced parents to fit in. There are many so-called successful big extended families in the congregation, and children of divorced parents felt like they were on the outside in a way; not part of a group. The interviewee claims that things have changed also on this point and that it is easier for people to ask for help now. It used to matter what family you belonged to, but now she thinks it has become more open.

Muslim respondents in Norway on religion as a barrier to citizenship as practice

> *'[…] It depends on how you understand the term "integration" in the Norwegian society. For me it has not been a problem. I feel that I'm well integrated, even if I don't go to discos, I don't go to places where they serve alcohol […]'.*
>
> (Norway min_maj 2; C2)

This interviewee addresses the term 'integration' which is frequently used in the Norwegian media debate about ethnic and religious minorities. She says that she attended social events at her work place, but did not drink alcohol. However, she felt a bit uncomfortable and she argues that one cannot be integrated if that is what 'integration' means; namely to be places where people drink a lot of alcohol. According to the interviewee, her religion does not forbid her to be there, but she feels uncomfortable. Some ethnic Norwegians might also think that her husband has forbidden her to attend social events, but she insists that this is not the case.

Religion as a barrier to participation in society is here linked to the meaning of 'integration'. The interviewee explains that her religion provides her with certain norms that guide her behaviour. However, according to the interviewee, these norms are not the problem; she does not describe these norms as barriers to participation. In her understanding, the barrier is rather the responses from ethnic Norwegians who automatically assume that she is forced to behave in a certain way because she is a Muslim woman. She also problematises the meaning of the concept 'integration' and indirectly suggests that ethnic Norwegians/society at large expect Muslims to assimilate; to act exactly as ethnic Norwegians, which in this case means drunken Norwegians at parties. So instead of addressing barriers due to religion, the interviewee also addresses what equal participation means. In her opinion, 'integration' also means to accept differences. The ideal of equal participation then would also entail the choice not to participate.

Several of our respondents say that their Muslim faith is not a barrier, but it is the society at large which does not accept Muslims. According to one interviewee, religion is not a barrier to her as a teacher, or as a mother. Her workplace has accepted her as a regular employee and they have facilitated her prayer in the work place and she can take time off from work twice a year during Muslim holidays.

Some of the interviewees claim that their status as 'immigrants' and language problems are greater barriers than religion for participation in the Norwegian society. One interviewee says that immigrants were more welcome, more included, and more active in Norwegian traditions when she arrived in Norway in the 1970s. Now, more people are engaged in their own activities. More people from her home country live in Norway now, and she feels more comfortable with them, and they are easier to be with. However, she does not like this division between immigrants and ethnic Norwegians.

Another interviewee feels excluded from the Norwegian society mainly due to language. She thinks it is difficult to understand the language used in the media, in newspapers, and letters from public offices. She speaks Norwegian quite well, but it is difficult to write a job application and she has to depend on her children. She was

once asked to join a political party, but she said 'no' because of the language. She has also been part of a consolatory council, but she felt like she was on the outside because of the language barrier. She has plenty of ideas, but lacks the words to explain her ideas.

According to the interviewee quoted below, Islam is not a hindrance for women's participation in society. However, the interviewee has experienced what she perceives as minor practical problems as a Muslim woman in the Norwegian society.

> *'According to Islam [...] a woman can function in all positions in society and can serve the society so to speak. I don't think that Islam or religion can stop her from doing that. [...] However, minor practical problems can make it harder for a Muslim woman in society. For example, I have a big problem with shaking hands, right? It doesn't only apply to women; it's supposed to be the same for both sexes. Muslims cannot shake hands with people from the opposite sex. It has to do with body contact, it sets limits. As a woman, that's very difficult for me, and especially where I work. [...] And at parties and so on. I find that very difficult. Often I actually have to drop it and it makes me ... it makes me feel bad.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 1; D1)

Other interviewees mention gender-mixed swimming as a problem.

One of the interviewees says that immigrants have to adapt to society, but in her opinion, the larger society also has to adapt to some extent. She will eventually try to work for more gender-segregated activities to be offered in Norway, like for instance swimming for women only. She thinks that would make Muslims' daily lives easier. However, she argues that it is hard to get the greater society to accommodate these wishes and demands. The interviewee emphasises that her wishes have not collided with her faith. For instance, she likes to snowboard and that is not a problem. However, if she would have liked to be a ballet dancer, that would have been more difficult, but not impossible. In her life she has to consider things carefully, but 'that's just the way life is. [(…] if you are patient, then things work out' (min_min 4; D4).

Summary

In this chapter we have discussed the term 'citizenship', both in general and in terms of religion. More generally, women in our study talked about citizenship in terms of

status, identity, participation, and belonging. The interviewees especially emphasise the collective aspect; to be a citizen with others, to be part of a community, and to belong to a community. Moreover, they mention the ability one has to influence, to take responsibility for others, and to help each other, both in the local community and in the society at large. Our interviewees elaborated on how legal, political, social, cultural and religious citizenship practices are part of their lives in terms of legal status, voting in political elections, participating in the work force, engaging in community activities, ethnic identities, and practicing their religious faiths. The various dimensions and perspectives discussed confirm feminist arguments against the classic view of citizenship as limited to legal and political rights, and for a broader view of citizenship encompassing participation, identity and belonging (see also Chapter 2).

'Religious citizenship' was a new term for our respondents; however, most of them thought it made sense to include religion in a citizenship terminology. Religious citizenship was argued by some women in our study to be prescriptive in both Christianity and Islam, where the faith is perceived as providing guidelines about how to be 'a good citizen'. To be 'a good citizen' and 'a good Christian' or 'a good Muslim' is basically the same for our interviewees; these aspects are intertwined. Being 'a good Christian' or 'a good Muslim' include showing love and care, respect and tolerance for each other. The term 'religious citizenship' addresses the interviewees' sense of belonging to a religious community in particular, and they expressed what that meant to them feeling at home in a religious community, and also to be part of a world-wide religious community. Some of the interviewees from the UK in particular, on the other hand, talked about what they perceived to be an incompatibility between the legal citizenship construct and that of religion, as they feared 'religious citizenship' might introduce divisive tendencies within communities and/ or discriminate against those who have not acquired the requisite legal documents of residing in the UK. Rather than talking about how every religion ideally should be treated equally, these respondents feared that a link between citizenship and religious faith would imply further inequalities between religious communities.

We have explored how religious identity, participation and practice are linked to citizenship, and whether religion is represented to be a resource or a barrier (or both) to citizenship as practice. The interviewees from all four religious groups talk about religion as a resource in quite similar ways. However, when they talk about barriers there are more differences between the Christian and the Muslim respondents. The minority position as being part of an 'ethnic minority' and also the majority society's view of Muslims in general are issues which are articulated. The Muslim women focus more on how the larger society treats Muslims, whereas the Christian women focus both on how the secular society treats religious people and on internal restrictions in their own religious communities. The Muslim women in our data material, both Sunni and Shia Muslims, were all generally concerned with the stereotypical image of the oppressed Muslim woman, and wanted to convey that such images are false and function to discriminate against and to exclude Muslim women.

6 PART A: GENDER EQUALITY

6.1 Introduction

In our project we explored the discourses of the interviewed religious women in Norway, Spain and the UK on gender equality, and on feminism and the women's movement. We found that the discourses of Christian and Muslim women in these three countries often shared very similar characteristics. The first part (A) of this chapter addresses how gender roles and gender equality are talked about in the interviews, while the second part (B) focuses on how interviewees' view feminism and the women's movement.

6.2 How is gender equality talked about?

The responses by religious women in our study to the question 'How does the term gender equality relate to your own understanding of the relationship between women and men?' varied. We identified several discourses concerning gender equality in the data material, including the most prominent discourse which talked about gender equality as *difference*, in the form of different, but complementary, social roles for women and men rooted in the idea that women and men are different by nature. The most common understanding of gender equality among our respondents was that men and women have equal value, but they are created differently by God and are thus meant to have different social roles. Furthermore, we identified a second type of discourse that talked about gender equality as *sameness*, in the form of equal and interchangeable opportunities and roles for women and men. A third, specific form of discourse found among our Muslim interviewees located gender equality within the prescriptive notions that can be found within the Qur'an and within the historical societal practices concerning gender relations that are said to have been practiced at the time of the Prophet Mohammad. In the next three sections we present our findings in relation to the three identified types of discourses.

6.2.1 Men and women are created differently, but they have equal value

Many of the women in our study, be they Christian or Muslim, residing in Norway, Spain or the UK, focused on the different biological make-up of women and men in

their understanding of the term 'gender equality', and thought that biological differences could explain and, to some extent, also justify women's and men's different social roles. At the same time, however, they emphasised that women and men have equal value or worth. We have called this a 'gender equality as difference' discourse.

The following quote illustrates the most common view on gender equality found among our respondents; a complementary view of women and men's roles based on biological arguments about women's and men's different, natural abilities:

> *'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 lays 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 4; (Maj_Min_04)

For this Sunni woman from Spain, gender equality is not a high priority. In her view, maintaining and supporting the alleged natural differences between women and men will ensure the net success of the community. It is important to protect gender differences because therein lays the compatibility among men and women. An Anglican interviewee in the UK also argued that differences in women's and men's physical ability indicate a difference in what social roles women and men can and should take on:

> *'Well, such as, if I wasn't strong enough to do a job, or I wasn't, you know, it is a bit like saying, you know, good idea if men had babies. Well they can't, it is not possible, and if I needed to be a strong man lifting heavy weights for a job, I couldn't do it so it is not on. But on the other hand there are some things, because I have an ability with numbers and figures, that I can do better than other people. I am also partially dyslexic, so if you asked me to be a secretary for a job, it is just not on. But that is not gender but it is to do with physical ability. Now on the other hand, if you turned around and told me I couldn't be an accountant just because you are a woman that would bug me.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 1; **Anglican 1)**

Her comment suggests she accepts that there are physical differences between women and men which might determine some of their social roles, especially

differences pertaining to child-bearing and to physical strength. At the same time, however, she is keen to emphasise that women and men do not necessarily have different intellectual capacities, and that such capacities are more related to particular individual characteristics than to gendered characteristics. Similarly, a Pentecostal participant in the UK also argued 'being a man' is different from 'being a woman', and that men are best at being men, while women are best at being women. She talks about the different skills of women and men, thus suggesting that such skills are inherent, or produced by nature. She argued:

> *'If it is not authentic, it is not real, a woman can't be as good at being a man as a man can be, and vice versa. I think women haven't used their strength in terms of just being women. Women are much more intuitive, they are better thinkers, we think things through better and if women would see that if we put those skills to work in the workplace it might take us a bit longer, but it would get us to where we want to get, rather than trying to be a hard-hitting, hardnosed male. Gender equality, I think, can only happen if the sexes understand each other and I don't think you can get such a thing as gender equality outside of the church but I don't think the church demonstrates it very well.'*
>
> (UK maj-min 4; **Pentecostal 4)**

For this interviewee, being a man and being a woman are two very different things; they do not overlap. She suggests that an understanding and acknowledgment of gender differences is necessary in order to appreciate the equal worth of men and women and their particular gender-based strengths and qualities. The same Pentecostal participant from the UK was of the opinion that many people fail to appreciate what she perceived to be important differences between males and females. She argued that physical differences between women and men are God-given, and that they are indicative of different roles for women and men in society. Therefore, in a sense, there can never be full *equality* between women and men, because they are not even meant to be doing the same things. She said:

> *'I don't think that outside of Christ the genders recognise that God created men male, with characteristics that women don't have. I think men are designed to, they have naturally more physical strength, for example. That is undeniable, why would a woman try to compete with a man, generally speaking, in a physical arena, when anybody with any common sense knows that he is bound to win in the physical arena. So to answer your question, gender equality, I don't think there is any such thing. I think there is a huge potential for it in the Church, but there is a lot of learning and a lot of faith in God's ability to do what he wants to do before that happens.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 4; **Pentecostal 4)**

The interviewee is suggesting that gender equality, based on her faith, is yet to be achieved within the church because many have failed to recognise the relevance of God creating women differently from men. Biological differences between women and men were also referred to by another UK interviewee, a Shia Muslim woman, when she talked about the issue of female witnesses in relation to the Qur'an:

> *'Gender equality, in the holy book it says men and women have got equal rights onto each other. But it also says because women forget more quickly than men, I am not talking about individuals but in general, when you look in general, women forget easily. So Islam says then you need to provide the evidence, you need to provide two women as witness. But the rights are equal rights. This does not mean that women have fewer rights and men have more rights. Physically men are built differently and are stronger, which is true. If you look at the physique of a woman and a man, the two are different ways that God created us. Otherwise their rights are equal.'*
>
> (UK min_min 3; **Shia 3)**

She seems to present a paradox where women and men are said to display differences in physical and mental capabilities, which in turn influence the extent to which they can be relied upon in a legal court, yet it is argued that they have equal rights. Her notion of equal rights includes an acceptance of the idea that two female witnesses, due to their comparable lack of rational faculties, equal one male witness. Generally, the issue of women's capabilities is talked about in ways that portrays women as more fragile and emotional than men, and as physically weaker than men. Their arguments seem to suggest that women cannot match men in certain areas, least of all those that require physical strength. As indicated above, some interviewees also shared the opinion that when men and women play different roles, it does not make much sense to talk about gender equality. For example, two Shia participants argued:

> *'Gender equality. I don't think it is, we are not talking about equality, it is two different things. When you have two different things you can't talk about equality between those things. Men and women are two different creatures; they have different feelings, different talents, [and] different powers.'*
>
> (UK min_min 1; **Shia 1)**

> *'Gender equality, it is not. I would never ... you can't say it is equality because we have got different roles. We are built for one role and men are built for another role.'*
>
> (UK min_min 4; **Shia 4)**

Such views could be said to be deterministic, in that they prescribe fixed and unchangeable roles for women and men in society. Their different social roles are justified by being rooted in perceived natural and biological differences. However, some interviewees' understanding of gender equality also dwelt on equal treatment and respect, irrespective of one's sex. These participants accept the notion that women and men are biologically different, but argued nonetheless for equal treatment. A UK Sunni participant's opinion reflected on biological difference and the need for equal treatment:

> *'It is, you know, people think that all rights have got to be the same, I don't think that, I think it is OK for us to have different rights but still be equal. Because, you know, fundamentally men and women are different and by their very nature, you know, the fact that women bear children and are more nurturing, they will have different roles to play, but that doesn't make them any less equal than men. I don't think a woman has to act like a man to be regarded as an equal you know.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 4; **Sunni 4)**

She is thus highlighting different natures, roles and rights, while at the same time arguing for equal value and worth. Similarly, a Pentecostal woman emphasised that there are biological and social differences between women and men, but she insisted it would be just or fair for men and women to have the same rights:

> *'I guess it is both genders having the same rights and same amount of respect and same amount of opportunities, would be my understanding.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 3; **Pentecostal 3)**

Similar attitudes towards biologically-given differences between women and men, and the equal value of women and men despite their different social roles, were found among our Christian and Muslim respondents in Norway:

> *'[…] I think that men and women are created as different, but as equals. We have different viewpoints [...] I think it is God's intention to make us different. However, we should enrich each other. We are meant to complement and enrich each other.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 1; A1)

> *'I think, without a doubt, that men and women have the same value. And I also think that they can perform the same tasks. Unless nature doesn't give them the same opportunities, for instance a man cannot breastfeed. However, in a society, I think both [women and men] should function towards the same goal.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 1; D1)

> *'Men should be men and women should be women. That is why God created men and women. If everybody should be women and everybody should be men, then, then it would be boring! So therefore; I don't think they should swap roles. It's not healthy and it's not good. Either for oneself or for the children and the family'*
>
> (Norway min_min 3; D3)

Respondents in Spain also revealed similar attitudes towards biological differences underpinning different social roles for women and men. A Sunni woman emphasised the different and complementary roles of women and men:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 4; Maj_Min_04)

A recurring theme among respondents in Spain was that it is somewhat useless or a lost cause to insist on proving that both men and women can do the same things. A number of interviewees said that although this may indeed be the case, life itself should not be about proving things for the sake of being right, but rather about taking advantage of one's gendered, natural abilities and skills:

> *'God tells each of us [men and women] one thing, do you understand?'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

The quotes from the Sunni woman above impart the notion that it is pointless to want to engage in activities that you're not naturally good at. Similar to all the participants quoted from different countries and religions in this section, this interviewee also holds a rather essentialist view of men and women, where each gender is perceived as being born with a gendered set of skills and abilities and where these determine the activities they can and/or 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 an actual inability to perform properly: 'it's not that they [women] feel lost, they are indeed lost'. The same Sunni

participant from Spain describes an interesting concept; the notion of 'half woman/half man', which also signals an 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

In the quote above, women who engage in traditionally male activities (e.g., paid work outside the home) are perceived as 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.'. The interviewee endorses a view of women as delicate and in need of protection. A working woman is also an independent and powerful woman, which seems to radically turn gender arrangements upside down, in an unwanted way.

A Pentecostal interviewee in Spain emphasises a God-given, complementary view of women's and men's different roles, but within the framework of complementary roles it is the man who has the ultimate authority and the highest status due to his financial contributions and responsibilities towards the family:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 2; Min_Maj_02)

Together, the quotes we have presented above illustrate a view of gender equality that is common in a majority of our interviews with both Muslim and Christian women in Norway, Spain and the UK. Men and women are perceived to have equal value or equal worth, but different roles based on their biological make-up and 'natural' abilities. In short, men and women are seen as different, but equal. The interviewees sometimes emphasise biological differences which are seen as created

by God. These differences are perceived as natural and taken for granted. The biological differences they mention are women's ability to give birth and to breastfeed, and that men are physically stronger than women. Some interviewees also talk about the different roles as mothers and fathers. Furthermore, some interviewees point to intellectual and emotional differences, where men are perceived as more 'rational' than women, while women are perceived as more emotionally driven than men. Some of the interviewed women claim that men's and women's brains are different; 'something about the brain that works differently' and 'thus you can never expect your husband to think the same way that you do, simply because he's created differently' (Norway maj_min 2; B2). These differences have to be accepted and recognised in order to understand each other's different point of views, the interviewees claim. They underline men's and women's complementary roles and the need to respect each other despite of these differences.

6.2.2 Gender equality as sameness through equal rights and opportunities

We have labelled a second, but less prominent type of discourse found among some of our research participants, including both Muslim and Christian women, a 'gender equality as sameness' discourse. Women who represented this type of discourse generally understood gender equality to mean equal opportunities for both women and men in a number of different contexts, and especially within education, politics and the labour market, but also within religious institutions. An Anglican woman in the UK commented:

> *'It means that men and women should be treated the same, paid the same for doing the same work, and given the same opportunities.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 4; **Anglican 4)**

This interviewee focuses on opportunities in the labour market, where women are still earning less (in the UK, as well as in Spain and Norway; see Chapter 1) than men for the same jobs. A Pentecostal woman emphasised that even if there are biological and social differences between women and men, it would be just or fair for men and women to have the same rights:

> *'I guess it is both genders having the same rights and same amount of respect and same amount of opportunities, would be my understanding.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 3; **Pentecostal 3)**

She is emphasising that women and men are entitled to be treated in the same way. Another Pentecostal interviewee also argued that the gender of an individual should not dictate what he or she could achieve, but instead the competencies and capabilities of individuals should be the deciding factor. Her argument introduces a notion of equality rooted in a sameness discourse, rather than a difference discourse. She argued:

> *'I would describe it as if anybody has a gift to fulfil a role that their gender should not be a determining factor in them fulfilling it. Gender should not be an issue with regard to your calling, your role, finding fulfilment. It mustn't be "You can't do that because you are a woman", or "You can't stay at home and look after the children because you are a man". I have a colleague and she is Head of Department and her husband, when the children were little, it was him that was the house-husband. I think that is great.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 5; **Pentecostal 5)**

The interviewee is saying that there are no reasons why women and men should not perform the same roles in church, in society and in the family. Her comment also suggests that role reversals in some circumstances are appropriate and should be encouraged. Many of our interviewees emphasise that men and women should have the same opportunities, that is, access to the same roles and positions in society. If a woman or a man is personally suited to do a job, they should be given the opportunity to perform it:

> *'I'm more concerned with personal suitability regardless of whether it's a woman or a man. It can be very capable male leaders, but it can also be very capable female leaders. Well, some men might like to think about traditional woman tasks, but I'm not that concerned with that, I'm more concerned with personal abilities.'*
>
> (Norway maj_maj 6; A6)

Several of the interviewees stress personal aspects; your personality and your personal abilities regardless of your biological sex. One interviewee says it is important to play along with one's personality and to be creative. She quotes St. Irenaeus: *'God's Glory – a human being fully alive'* (Norway maj-maj 2; A2). Equal opportunities for all human beings regardless of their gender, seems to be the main view among these respondents. Individual characteristics are portrayed as more important than gender characteristics in terms of performing a particular role. When every person is valued for who they are, and have the opportunity to use their potential, then equality will be ensured.

Equal opportunities were also emphasised by another Anglican woman, who acknowledges that there are challenges in actually providing equal opportunities for women and men, said:

> *'I think it comes down to women having the same opportunities as men and also, I guess, having the same responsibilities as well. But I think that sort of goes together. I know that is quite simple.'*
>
> (UK maj_maj 6; **Anglican 6)**

A Sunni woman, on the other hand, points out that although women and men should, in principle, be treated the same and have the same opportunities, they may, in practice, be treated differently. She mentions how she *relates* differently to her daughter, but emphasises that both children are treated in the same way:

> *'I think it means opportunity for both of them, men and female. I don't know how to put that. Because we are given the same status as well, so I think it is more or less equal as well. Because no matter what, we will treat a daughter in a nice way, I am not saying we treat bad or anything, but because, I don't know, because I think they are equal to me, my daughter and sons. And like nowadays we do treat all the same.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 1; **Sunni 1)**

The presence of barriers to achieving equality between women and men was also identified by some interviewees. For example, a Sunni participant acknowledges that there are people in society who would not encourage gender equality:

> *'What gender equality would mean to me is a society in which women could do, literally speaking, as well as in practice, they could do anything they wanted. There wouldn't be any barriers. But, unfortunately, obviously there are people out there who don't agree with that and because of that there are, and not just for Muslim women, but all women.'*
>
> (UK min_maj 5; **Sunni 5)**

Similarly, a Shia participant from Spain commented that despite women enjoying the same opportunities as men, there are entrenched social and cultural ideas and expectations about gender roles that still function to uphold male privilege:

> *'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 [...] Christians, I think all this [this dimension of gender roles] is determined by the Arabic more than the Muslim mentality.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; Min_Min_05)

A similar view, expressing limitations to how far a sameness ideal of gender equality can be realised, especially in the private sphere of the home, can be found in this quote by a Sunni woman in Spain:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 1; Maj_Min_01)

The notion that gender equality might also come with a loss to women is a recurring theme among women from all religious groups. For example, the Catholic woman from Spain below indicates that men and women should be equal, including in the household, where both should perform household chores and raise children. But she points out that women today work harder than men, presumably because they are in paid employment combined with the main responsibility for the family and the household. Even men who do participate in unpaid work at home, do not do so on an equal par with their female partners. Therefore, the interviewee argues that today's woman 'has lost things', due to their 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 2; Maj_Maj_02)

While research participants on the one hand expressed their understanding of gender equality as an abstract concept or in idealistic terms, many participants also reflected on the practice of gender equality and the public advocacy of gender equality. In addition to expressing barriers to gender equality, some interviewees also imparted the notion that calls for gender equality might go 'too far' (see also Part B of Chapter 6). For example, a Pentecostal participant had the opinion that gender equality has already been achieved, and that there is a tendency for some women to push extreme agendas that might render men powerless. Another Pentecostal woman had the view that gender equality is being advocated by women who wish to

dominate men for their personal reasons. She suggested that turning patriarchy into matriarchy would be contrary to her faith:

> *'I actually think it is pretty equal now. A part of me worries that it will go to the other extreme where men will be totally minimalised and women would be the powerhouses, and I actually think scripturally that is wrong. And I think if that happens there would be issues. I think it is wrong when you see churches where it is like almost an all female leadership and their husbands are sort of like pathetic little creature that follow behind them. That actually makes me really cross, I feel like rousing the husbands and going, come on rise up, you have got a role, you have got gifting you know.'*
>
> (UK maj_min 2; **Pentecostal 2)**

These interviewees suggested that gender equality has already been achieved and that feminists are rather pursuing an agenda to control men. They thus see feminism as arguing for matriarchy, or the inverse of patriarchy, rather than for gender equality. For these women, there seems to be a limit as to how far women should push for leadership positions within the churches.

In conclusion, the 'sameness' discourse on gender equality among participants in our study reflected on gender equality in social, economic, political, and religious contexts. Issues such as equal opportunities and respect suggest a demand that women should be able to participate on an equal par with men, and that all social roles should be open to both genders. There is still a need to break down barriers which might hinder women's participation in society. There was also a sense of caution, however, where a more extreme version of a gender equality agenda was said to be an attempt to disempower men, where men, for instance, are made to play minimal roles in the church.

6.2.3 Gender roles and relations as prescribed by religious doctrine

A third, specific form of discourse found among some of our Muslim interviewees located gender equality within the prescriptive notions that can be found within the Qur'an and within the historical, societal practices concerning gender relations that were exemplified by the Prophet Mohammad. For these participants, the notion of gender equality was understood in terms of religiously prescribed gender relations. This was a unique feature to Muslim participants, who explicitly referred to the Qur'an and to the Prophet Mohammad when they legitimated their own

understandings of gender equality. Christian participants, on the other hand, did not explicitly or directly relate their understanding of gender equality to the Bible or to their religious traditions. Therefore, this section focuses on views found among our Muslim participants in the UK, Norway and Spain.

Muslim interviewees highlight the positive view of women in the sacred texts and historical past of Islam. They also stress that the 'true' faith image of women has been wrongly interpreted by human beings and that culture/society/men/religious traditions have oppressed women. The Muslim interviewees emphasise the Prophet Mohammad's respect for women and that he greatly improved women's position at the time when he lived. Most of the interviewees mention his wives, who had important roles in society, notably Khadija and Aisha, and the respect that Mohammad had for his daughter, Fatima. A view shared by most of our Muslim interviewees is that Islam is *for* gender equality; the Qur'an says so and the way Mohammad treated women also supports this. The Muslim interviewees frequently mention female role models from the Qur'an, for instance Fatima (Mohammad's daughter) and Zaynab (Mohammad's granddaughter). According to the interviewees these women were both brave and knowledgeable. They are also described as strong women who spoke out against social injustice, and the interviewees impart that Muslim women are not only supposed to be quiet and sweet.

> *'[…] both men and women have the same position in society. […] But before Islam, before Mohammad received revelations, it was shameful to get a daughter. People used to bury their daughters alive. This was forbidden and condemned by the Qur'an. [(…] So women have a central role and women are highly respected within Islam […]'.*
>
> (Norway min_maj 5; C5)

> *'[…] On religious holidays they talk about 'men and women and their roles in Islam' [in the mosque]. And they are equals. There are no differences. They are equals. Okay, so men are stronger, but that doesn't mean that they are not equals – or that they should be treated differently. […] However, many Muslims do not understand that. They look down on women, not on men. Men are supposed to have the power, and that's wrong. Mohammad himself didn't do that. He didn't. He had several wives, but he treated them the same. Right? He was not mean to them or anything like that. But today; some men say: "We have the power", but most of these men do not have the knowledge. As long as you have the knowledge and the experience then you avoid problems in life and in the world.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 2; D2)

In the opinion of our interviewees, 'true Islam' says that men and women have the same value and are equally respected. The people with 'true' knowledge of Islam know this, but many people do not know enough.

> *'Well, he [Mohammad] married many [wives], but that was because it was a time of war. Right? The men were killed, while the women were at home. And that is the reason why it's not that way today; it's not that much war, right. You have one wife and that's enough. BUT, many men think, they don't think about religion, about Islam, they don't think about that – it's just; "I want to have four wives". "I want to have five wives". When you're not able to treat them just and fair, why should you have that? You are supposed to treat them equally! No difference, not different treatment. One woman is enough. Islam doesn't say that you have to marry four wives. It was back at that time that they did that. Mohammad Sallallahu alayhi wa sallam married many, but that was because their men got killed and the women became widows. He did that so that they should avoid problems, so that others shouldn't bother them. So that other men shouldn't come and abuse them.'*
>
> (Norway min_min 2; D2)

According to the Muslim interviewees, culture is to blame for men's domination and their oppression of women. Some of the interviewees say that this is especially the case in the countryside in their respective countries of origin, and that Muslim women residing in urban areas in countries such as Norway, Spain and the UK are not similarly oppressed.

The Muslim women in our data material also explicitly refer to the Qur'an when they legitimate the ideal of the complementary roles of the woman and the man in the family; the man as the main provider and the woman as the primary caretaker of children. Many of the interviewed Muslim women emphasised women's role as mother as particularly important within Islam:

> *'A mother is highly respected. A mother has a central place. It is said that paradise it at your mother's feet, right. If you want to go to paradise you do all good things for your mother.'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 5; C5)

> *'The first that comes to mind is what it says in the Qur'an. [...] That is the duties you have towards God, which are the same for men and women. I think that men and women are equals in that respect, but still, well, a man is not a woman. A woman is not a man. And the belief that a man and a woman can have different tasks, but yet they have the same value. [...] For instance, in Islam, the man is the main provider for family. [...] That doesn't*

mean that a woman can't work, just that the man has the main responsibility for the family's economy. […] It is a kind of a recipe that God has given us. […]'

(Norway min_maj 1; C1)

These quotes illustrate that the role of the mother is highly valued among the Muslim participants in our study, and also that the mother and the father have different roles within the family. The mother has the role as the main caretaker of the children in the family, whereas the father has the main responsibility of the family's economy. However, the interpretation in the second quote immediately above is that these rules are to be treated as guidelines, and they are not written in stone. The woman *can* be the primary provider in a family, and the man and the woman can negotiate between them who is doing what. However, the family's economy is the man's main responsibility, and care of the children is the woman's main responsibility. According to the interviewee above, these responsibilities can be combined. Moreover, these rules are important when something goes wrong; when for instance the children don't get what they need etc. Then the man is to blame. The interviewee does not think this is discriminating against women; rather the opposite; the man has more limitations; he always have to prioritise his family's economic needs while the woman is not constrained in the same way.

Imparting a 'gender equality as difference view', some of the interviewees explain the different roles of women and men in the family with reference to their gendered qualities:

'[…] the difference between men and women is basically the physical part. It is different. […] But it's not only that, it's also because of women's emotions, for instance. The reason why women can't be in a court is because of the feelings they have inside; that is the difference between men and women. And there are many other things that he talked about [A visitor from Iran, a professor from University]. But in every other way they should be treated the same and they should respect each other. And the mother is very important in Islam; to raise children, and when it comes to children and family, that is very important in Islam. Actually, the mother has a huge role. But because of some differences, they [the man and the woman] have some different tasks. Men are somewhat physically stronger and they can do things that they are suited for, while women can do things that they are suited for. But basically a woman can do everything; however, it may not be healthy for her. It's not good for her. Do you know what I mean?'

(Norway min_min 3; D3)

The quote above illustrates how some of the interviewees legitimate men's and women's different roles in the family; women are more emotional and the man is physically stronger. Another interviewee also stresses that God has created men and women differently and that there are things that women cannot do; they cannot go to war (soft hearts, too sensitive). Women cannot be very strict and they are physically weaker than men, even though women are intelligent and very capable and they can endure a lot. Further, this interviewee also claims that the majority of men cannot raise children. In her view, there are exceptions, but they are few and far between. Men do not have the patience to raise children. In her view, these complementary gender roles are not at odds with gender equality. She says that gender equality means to respect each other. It also means that men and women should receive equal pay in the labour market. Several of the interviewees, both Christian and Muslim, mention equal pay for equal work as an important aspect of gender equality and this is an issue they do not question. However, you cannot change natural differences; the way we are created when it comes to complementary gender roles in the family:

> *'To provide food or clothes and warmth and to get a place to live is easy. But to give care and love – that will be missing, I think [if the father is the sole caretaker]. You can't give both; because the mother's and the father's … you can't do both roles at the same time. But a mother can play that role. I've seen a mother raise her children all by herself, but if a father should do it … That is a bit difficult for me to say that it will be 100 per cent. But like I said before, maybe one of several men can do it …'.*
>
> (Norway min_maj 2;C2)

The quotes emphasise the importance of the role of the mother, and also the extraordinary qualities that a woman has which makes her more capable to take care of children. The interviewees also stress that motherhood is highly valued and they argue that being a housewife and a mother should be recognised as equally important for society as someone in the labour market or in politics. This is connected to the men's and women's equal value in society and in the Qur'an. A man has to protect the woman and the whole family, provide for them and make money. He has to be good and kind and should help the mother in raising the children. The woman can contribute to the family's economy, but that is not her main responsibility. One interviewee explains this by saying that the woman should not work 'double shifts'. She can contribute if she wants to and if she has the energy.

According to this interviewee, it is sometimes a discrepancy between the ideal and practice, but that can happen in any family, not only Muslim families. The interviewees underline that this view of complementary gender roles and the emphasis on women's role as a mother is not discriminatory of women. The housewife ideal does not mean that men should oppress women. In their view, Islam's view of women is an expression of respect, care and love.

These statements about the importance of motherhood and the connection between complementary gender roles and gender equality (in the meaning of equal value) can be interpreted as a wish to upgrade the value of housework and child-care for small children in societies such as Norway, Spain and the UK. Women need recognition for their work in the house and what they do as mothers. These women claim that men and women should have the same opportunity to grow as a person, but men and women do not necessarily do the same things. In their view equal value also means that a housewife has to be seen as a respected person and an important citizen.

Many of the Muslim women we interviewed have families and also participate in the labour market. They do not necessarily see any contradiction between the Qur'anic prescription that women's main responsibility is to take care of home and children, and women's participation in paid work:

> *'[...] The ideal for women in Norway in general is to have a career. That does not contradict the ideal for women – if you can call it that – in the Muslim religion. What matters is how you do things. For instance, you can have a career and still practice [your religion].'*
>
> (Norway min_maj 1; C1)

This quote illustrates the view of Islam as supportive of women's rights to have a career. The Muslim ideal of the housewife and the emphasis on the role as a mother is not the whole picture. The quote above shows that the Muslim women find support in their religion if they want to have a career. Several of the Muslim interviewees think that it is certainly possible to combine the ideal of the good mother and a career. Family should come first, and they want to live up to the 'traditional' women's role as nurturing and caring. However, studying and work is also something they want to pursue in their own lives. One interviewee says that

Norwegian women's role is more career oriented; if you don't have a career you're a failure. In her opinion, it is fine to have a career, but not if it comes before your family and if your job makes you exhausted and burned out. Then it is not worth it.

However, other Muslim interviewees thought that it was fine for women to combine motherhood, housework and paid work in the labour market. For example, when asked about the ideal role of a woman, a Sunni interviewee from Spain replied:

> *'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 …'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 1; Maj_Min_01)

The quote emphasises that Muslim women can and should take on paid work in order to secure their financial independence. However, the quote also supports an interpretation of the Qur'an which prescribes that women should take care of the home, children and husbands. The interviewee seems to support the idea that women should be able to work double, or even triple, shifts by working outside the home, taking care of the children and husband, and doing the housework. Another Sunni interviewee from Spain, however, suggests that if women do paid work outside the home, their husbands should also participate in housework. She also indicates that men might be resisting such sharing of responsibilities and duties in the home:

> *'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".'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

The quote above suggests that since women are mainly associated with the household and men are mainly associated with everything outside the home, a working woman is behaving in a manly way, or in a way which contradicts traditional gender prescriptions. She suggests that when women gain independent financial status they are more likely to make demands on their husbands and to challenge

conventional household/gender arrangements. According to this interviewee, husbands will find it hard to accept changing gender arrangements in the home.

The notion that women should do paid work to secure financial independence is, however, not shared by all our Muslim interviewees. An older Sunni interviewee from Spain regards 'multiple shifts' (working at home and in the labour market) as detrimental to women and blame women for having brought it onto themselves. For these more traditional Sunni Muslim women, paid employment is something that women should take on 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

More conservative Islamic views, expressed by some of our interviewees, perceive all roles outside marriage and motherhood as a result of women acting selfishly. One Sunni interviewee from Spain was particularly concerned with this topic. To be thinking about her own personal needs and wants, and to pursue non-traditional gender roles (such as working outside the home), was viewed as a selfish act and something with very negative social implications:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

The views expressed above are perhaps the most traditional, especially because all the blame falls on women and their alleged selfishness. No alternative analysis is offered; it is asserted that working women have chosen the wrong path. A negative analysis of women's labour market participation was also offered by a Sunni participant from the UK. She argued that Islam ensures equality by prescribing different roles for men and women within the family; where the man should provide the family income, while the woman takes care of children and household chores. However, changes in the roles, due to women's work commitments or economic

pressures on the family, were attributed to the breakdown of family relations. The interviewee argued:

> *'Islam brings equality. […] The husband has to go out and earn and provide, and the woman's duty is to look after the house and look after the children, Now what is happening in this, twenty-first century, husband doing night shift, wife doing the day shift, they don't see each other. Then trouble starts, when they see, something […] going wrong, they argue, affecting children, children get fed up and start going out. […] Again the balance has gone, the quality of life has gone.[…] So it is not the family bonding, it is not, when you want to understand the quality of life, then unless you put the balance back'.*
>
> (UK min_maj 3; **Sunni 3)**

She reflects on the challenges of today's need for both partners to be in paid employment outside the home, as compared with her view of a historical past where women were housewives and men were the family providers.

Another Muslim woman focused on prescriptive rules within Islam regarding inheritance and house work. She had the opinion that Islam ensures more rights for women than for men, with women having no financial obligations towards the family. The Shia participant explained her opinion about inheritance rules:

> *'In this case we have more rights than men, in Islam. When somebody dies, this is just one example, if they leave money or property it is left to the children, isn't it, who is left. In Islam, if you get it as a lady it is yours. But if a boy gets it, it is for his family. You can keep yours, nobody could force you to spend it on your family, but men can't keep it, they have to spend it on their family and their wife'.*

The interviewee indicates that men have more financial obligations towards their families than women.[91] She goes on to talk about women not having any formal *obligation* to take care of children and perform house work:

> *'The other thing is, as a mother myself, when I breast-feed my daughter I could charge my husband. I could take him to court, you could forgive or just*

[91] Badawi (1995), a Professor in Management and Religious studies at St. Mary's University in Canada, suggests that the teachings of the Qur'an dictate that the male inherits twice the inheritance of the female as the male is financially responsible for all female relations, sisters, daughters, mother and wives; females inherit less but are under no obligation to spend it on themselves or their families. The female is allowed to keep her inheritance, but its value is less than that given to her male counterparts. Badawi's argument supports the understanding of our interviewee (Shia 1), but he emphasises that the value of the men's inheritance is higher than that of women's. Therefore, the argument of more privileges for women is contextual depending on the financial obligations within a particular family.

forget about it, but if you want to charge him for his role to support you. I could charge him for housework or if I don't do it so he has to pay somebody to do it, or he has to pay someone to breast-feed his baby, or look after the baby. Nowhere in the world, in no religions do you find all these points giving to the lady. You could charge your husband for anything you do. Even bedtime.'

(UK min_min1; **Shia 1)**

She seems to be using these examples rhetorically, in order to emphasise that women are privileged within Islam. Her argument stands in contrast to the view forwarded by previous quotes in this section, indicating that equality between men and women are religiously prescribed where women have the responsibility of taking care of children and the home. This Shia interviewee is suggesting that she could, in theory at least, ask her husband to compensate her for roles in the home and child care. Her comment also suggests that in Islam, women are treated much better than men, thus the concept of equality does not arise as women have more rights and privileges than men.

Another Shia participant from the UK drew attention to the role of women as witnesses in legal cases as prescribed in the Qur'an. She argued that using the eye witness account of two women to equal the eye witness account of one man is to follow the teaching of Islam, and that it does not imply that women are not treated equally with men. She stated:

'In the Qur'an it does say, for example, if you are in the court as a witness, the testimony of two women is equivalent to the testimony of one man. And the reason for that is, because women are more emotionally swayed. Whereas the man, they are saying perhaps he is not ruled so much by his heart as by his head. So there are things that people could say, you are an equal; you are saying two women equals one man; that is not true. It is just to cover things and be on the safe side. So something as important as testifying if it is somebody's life. So it is like not to put so much responsibility in a way. It doesn't mean putting them down or anything, but it is just like it is quite a big responsibility to testify and it is like if shared like it is easier in a way. I don't see that as unequal treatment'.

(UK min_min 4; **Shia 4)**

Her argument suggests that women witnesses are more emotional than men, and thus, by implication, they are less led by rationality and less objective than men. Also, her comments are based on the perception that all women are emotionally swayed without considering the differences in mental capacity of individual men and

women to handle legal issues. The example shows that the interviewee uses the Qur'an to justify specific gender arrangements pertaining to marriage. Thus some Muslim participants in our study seem to support a particular interpretation of the Islamic legal tradition, of two female witnesses equalling one male witness, without questioning its adequacy or relevance in contemporary times.[92] The same interviewee continues by giving polygamy as another example, where equal behaviour of men and women contradicts the teachings of Islam. She said:

> *'For example, a man can have four wives, you say why are you putting women down, why can't women have four husbands you know, it is ridiculous. I mean a woman can only have one husband because of the children you know, you need to know who the father is and it doesn't make any sense, more than one husband, because of the family unit. But saying that, men in the law, in the Qur'an are allowed up to four because of circumstances, because it can happen that there is a time of war or there is a time that women are surplus in society and what do they do, they need support.'*
>
> (UK min_min 4; **Shia 4)**

She thus suggests that polygamy does not imply unequal treatment of women because in some circumstances it is deemed a necessary for men to have multiple wives. However, the issue of polygamy was also addressed by other Muslim women in our study, with reference to Islam allowing a man to have four wives. The Prophet Mohammad had several wives, but according to these interviewees, this was because of war at the time when he lived. They claim that one wife is enough for any Muslim man today. Thus there are differences in how flexibly the Qur'an and religious traditions are interpreted by women in our study. A main finding, however, is that many Muslim women in our study make explicit references to the Qur'an and to the Prophet Mohammad in order to justify their own views on women's and men's roles in society and on women's rights in contemporary society.

6.3 Summary: Part A

The data material demonstrates that religious women think in many different ways about gender equality and gender roles. An emphasis on biological differences, complementary gender roles and the equal value of women and men are main

[92] Different and competing views can be found among scholars such as Badawi (1995) and Wadud (1999), who argue that Qur'anic prescriptions regarding the value of male and female witnesses must be regarded with flexibility considering women's roles in contemporary society.

findings in the interviews with women from all the different religious communities. However, in addition to the acknowledgment, the recognition, and respect for such differences, many interviewees also emphasise that women and men should be entitled to have the same opportunities in terms of inhabiting various roles and positions in society.

Most participants' understanding of gender referred to the sex (male/female) of the individual. They argued on the basis of biological differences between women and men, and suggested that such differences have implications for the social world. Many participants argued for a comparably equal value, rather than an absolute equal value, of women and men. This preference could be as a result of the alleged biological differences between women and men and the different social gender roles that were seen to be prescribed through faith and belief.

The responses indicate that while most participants talked about issues involving gender equality on the basis of differences between women and men (a 'gender as difference discourse'), some participants instead argued for gender equality on the basis of the 'sameness' of women and men (a 'gender as sameness discourse'). While equality as difference implies an acceptance of unequal but complementary roles of equal *value*, equality as sameness implies that both women and men should be able to inhabit and perform *the same* roles and take on *the same* responsibilities.

In terms of gender roles in Christianity and Islam, a concern for the equal value of complementary gender roles was evident among many of our research participants. Thus, in any advocacy work seeking to promote gender equality within religious practice, which would involve the negotiation and changing of patriarchal structures to ensure women's participation, it might be especially useful for activists to acknowledge that such advocacy may as well be rooted in arguments based on gender equality as difference, as in arguments based on gender equality as sameness. This suggests a continual discussion of different meanings and understandings of gendered citizenship and gender equality within religious contexts. Many feminist advocates would argue that gender equality means sameness, and that the goal is to make sure that women and men actually share the same opportunities, roles, and responsibilities. The lived realities and preferences of some

of the religious women we have interviewed, however, suggest that gender equality is also thought of in terms of complementarity between women's and men's different roles and responsibilities. Ignoring the perceived differences between women and men which were observed by our interviewees would perhaps imply a failure on the part of gender equality activists to recognise some religious women's views and experiences. Policies promoting sameness might not necessarily be promoting the interests of these women.

Responses from our study suggest that the agenda for gender equality was largely regarded as desirable (see also Part B of this chapter); however, the concept of gender equality was interpreted in different ways. Whilst a majority of the women argued for complementary roles and equal value, others argued that women and men should enjoy the same opportunities and be able to occupy the same roles in society at large (within politics, work and education), within religious communities, and within the family. Those who argued for equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities were measuring women's current situation against a male status quo, in which women still do not enjoy the same rights and status as men. On the other hand, some interviewees also cautioned that a further pursuance of the gender equality agenda might imply an understanding of gender equality as matriarchy rather than patriarchy, as in their view equality between women and men has already been achieved.

Both Muslim and Christian interviewees highlight the positive view of women in the sacred texts of their respective religions. They also stress that the 'true' faith image of women has been wrongly interpreted by humans during the course of history, and that culture/ society/men/religious traditions have oppressed women. Especially the Muslim interviewees emphasise the Prophet Mohammad's respect for women and that he greatly improved women's position at the time when he lived. The Muslim women in our data material explicitly refer to the Qur'an when they legitimate the ideal of the complementary roles of the man and the woman in the family; the man as the main provider and the woman as the main caretaker of children. Some of the Muslim interviewees do not perceive any religiously prescribed hindrances to women's participation in the labour market, or to men's participation in housework. They impart the view that religious doctrine is not fixed, rather, it is flexible and can

accommodate contemporary social arrangements where women and men have more interchangeable roles. The Christian women in our study do not similarly refer to the Bible or to their religion in justifying contemporary gender roles and relations. While some of the Christian women talk about their practice of staying at home when the children were small, they do not explicitly refer to the Bible or their religion when they talk about this.

6 PART B: RELIGIOUS WOMEN'S VIEWS ON FEMINISM AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

6.4 Introduction

In this part of Chapter 6 we focus on how Christian and Muslim women in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom view women's movements, and how they talk about the influence of women's movements on women's lives. We also discuss how our research participants talk about feminism and whether they identify with the term 'feminism' or not. In general, the interviewees had quite positive attitudes towards the women's movement in terms of its achievements regarding women's rights. However, they also identified both the women's movement and feminism with a 'too radical' or 'too extreme' agenda which was said to include notions about female superiority rather than gender equality.

6.5 How are feminism and the women's movement talked about?

Christian and Muslim women in all three countries saw the women's movement as having had an important role, in particular in relation to women's suffrage, education, and empowerment. The role of advocates within the movement was appreciated, however our Muslim and Christian interviewees revealed differences between their responses, in particular in relation to the impact of the women's movement on religion. Muslim women in particular highlighted the advanced position of women in early Islam, and contrasted this with much later feminist developments in Western, Christian countries. Muslim women were appreciative of the impact of the women's movement on political, social and cultural aspects of societies, but did not necessarily see a role for or an impact of the women's movement within their own

religion. Christian women, on the other hand, acknowledged that the women's movement affected both society at large and the role of women in churches. They argued that gender relations have changed within the church where women have been given increased roles in the practice of the faith, such as lay preachers, vicars, or even bishops. Some also shared the opinion that the women's movement had changed the everyday lives of religious women. The findings also show that the women's movement has facilitated processes where changes have been introduced for women to participate more in society in general and within their religious organisations in particular.

> *'I've actually thought a lot about that [the influence of the women's movement], and I'm forever grateful! […] If it weren't for the battle they've fought, I wouldn't be sitting here today. Many times I think that I'm too 'sleepy' [sovende]. […] Through the years I haven't been dependent on a man in order to make my life work, even if that was what I was brought up to believe. And all the opportunities that have been laid out in front of me; education, to be able to live wherever I want, to live alone, and to move here. […] It's the women's movement which has gone in front and opened up for all of this.'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 1; A1)

In the quote above, the interviewee says that she is 'grateful' to the women's movement for all opportunities she has had in her life. Similar statements were made by other interviewees who emphasised the impact of the women's movement in terms of increasing opportunities for women. A Sunni participant from the UK stated:

> *'I think it has empowered my knowledge to be able to go to other women and say to them "Look, these women in the past, they didn't have the voting rights we had today, they didn't have these facilities, they didn't have childcare, look what they achieved, why aren't you achieving, why aren't you doing something. If not for yourselves, for your children". In particular, Muslim women, when you come to them with that tactic, make them think and they think for our children and for your daughters.'*
>
> (UK min-maj 5; **Sunni 5)**

The women's movement was also said to have ensured the presence of more women in politics and in the education and health sectors. A Shia participant from the UK stated:

> *'Yes it [the women's movement] is very important, […] definitely. […] And throughout the centuries, from [the] '50s to this decade, women have done a lot. […] always in favour of the women's movement for their rights in*

education, in government yes, we need more, I would like to see more women in government, in education, in health.'

(UK min-min 3; **Shia 3)**

The notion that the women's movement 'is very important' was used by several interviewees and its importance was linked to both individual states and to the entire world as such:

'[The women's movement] is very important. I don't think women in the whole world would have been able to get as far as they are today without the women's movement. There are many, many people in the world who try to devaluate women. I don't know where they take that from, but it has been different cultures. The developing countries are the worst.'

(Norway min-min 1; D1)

Together, the quotes from the different countries illustrate a common understanding among the interviewees in our data material; they have a mostly positive view of the women's movement in terms of its work towards securing women's rights and gender equality. A majority of women from the different religious communities describe the women's movement as 'important'.

According to the interviewees, the women's movement has had a decisive role regarding an increased consciousness about women's rights, not just in Norway, Spain and the UK, but on a global scale. Women have been made aware of their rights; they are becoming stronger and demand mutual respect. The interviewees emphasise equal pay, gender equality and rights as human beings.

6.6 The women's movement and religious communities

In this section we present findings which highlight the ways in which interviewed religious women relate actions and ideas from women's movements to the ways in which gender relations have developed within their own religious communities. The section is divided in four parts: Christian majority women (Anglican, Lutheran, and Catholic), Pentecostal women, Sunni Muslim women, and Shia Muslim women.

Christian majority women

> *'[…] I don't associate the women's movement with Christian communities. […] However, I'm a part of society as a whole, right?'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 1; A1)

> *'[…] I think the women's movement has made society as a whole and also Christian women ask: "why do we make coffee, serve cake and smile and look cute, while the men are deciding everything for us?" I think it made women asking questions.'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 1; A1)

The first quote above exemplifies a common answer to the question about the possible influence of the women's movement in the interviewees' lives, both on a personal level and also with regards to their religious communities. Very few of the interviewees associate the women's movement with their religious community, however, they all underline that a religious community is not isolated from the rest of society. '[…] the religious tradition is not "a closed room" in a society' (Norway maj-maj 3; A3), as one interviewee puts it.

The interviewees who belong to the State Church of Norway exemplify this by the fact that women now can become priests (and also bishops). One interviewee says that the women's movement has had an enormous impact on the State Church, and that women can perform the same tasks as men in the Church is a result of the women's movement's effort and consciousness-raising. She also emphasises that women within the Church are at the same time also women in society at large and that the Church is not isolated from society. The interviewee problematises a view of the Church as simply a mirror of society and she argues that the Church can be an important counter-culture. However, the women's movement and all kinds of political activity in society will also influence the Church in one way or another.

Another interviewee who belongs to the Church of Norway says that there are strong women inside the Church as well, but what happens outside the Church has helped and in that respect the women's movement has had an impact.

In their personal lives, the women's movement has had an indirect impact, these women claim. One interviewee from Norway says that she has become more

conscious about her life as a woman and also about her position as a female leader in the Church. She has become more conscious of a gender perspective during the last years when she has been a leader in the congregation. She did not identify with 'women's rights women' while she was younger, but now she applauds them. In her own life she has profited from their work.

Some Christian participants from the UK also argued that the women's movement has facilitated the recognition of the competencies and capacities of women in faith, resulting in the removal of barriers that prevented them from holding some positions in the church. The Church of England was used as an example where women have been given increased roles. Some of the Anglican participants highlighted the role of women priests as an example of the impact the women's movement has had on their Church. One Anglican said:

> *'I suppose it has in some way, certainly in the Anglican Church, women have started to play a bigger role and taken more positions of power, so to speak. In other faiths obviously that has always happened. If you are looking specifically at the Church of England then yes, I would say it would have made a difference.'*
>
> (UK maj-maj 4; **Anglican 4)**

She acknowledges the impact the women's movement has had in supporting women obtaining more prominent roles in the Anglican Church.

A second Anglican participant gave another example of the impact of the women's movement on the church. She said:

> *'The women's movement, well in a way yes, with the ordination of women yes. But then again you had a very extreme group that put a lot of the clergy off, they went a bit too far. But, you know, you do get the fanatics that do spoil any proper issues. But I think that the genuine ones, they have sort of chipped away and they have got their voice heard. And now we are getting more and more women Ordinates which is good, which is good.'*
>
> (UK maj-maj 5; **Anglican 5)**

Pentecostal women

> *'There have, of course, been strong female leaders [in the Pentecostal movement] from early on who have been able to get ahead. But whether they've been feminists, I can't really say. [...] But I know a woman who's 95-years-old who actually started as an Evangelist. She stood up at a*

conference [...] and took off her hat and said, "You should try to stand there for 45 minutes and preach with a hat and feel how warm it is and how horrible it is. So – I choose not to wear a hat". So of course she became some kind of feminist or advocate for many who came after her. [...] And also the female missionaries who had the courage to go alone into the bush and be alone and out there they've blossomed – and performed all the religious services that they weren't allowed to do in the Church here in Norway. Yes. So they've been advocates as well.'

(Norway maj-min 1; B1)

'[…] I don't relate particularly to the women's movement because I've never had any problems in regard to being seen. I've had a husband who's seen me, who's pushed me forward and allowed me to do different things. I've been the leader of the children's work here [in the congregation], and he was the one in the background cleaning up. [...] But I see that it [the women's movement] has influenced society, and probably churches and congregations as well. Concerning female priests and everything.'

(Norway maj-min 1; B1)

As we see in the quote immediately above, this interviewee has personally never experienced any different treatment due to her gender within the congregation.

Some interviewees mentioned that not all Christian denominations have allowed an increased formal participation of women, even in roles which they have been playing for a long time. A Pentecostal interviewee from the UK stated that things have however changed in her congregation. Women's participation has become more visible, and women are no longer only preaching to other women, but also to gender mixed audiences. She implies that activities in which women were previously engaged behind the scenes in the Church, are now made more visible. She explained:

'Yes, I suppose so, because I think that women began to be recognised more and it took a long while for that to work through, but I think there is, there are still church denominations like X where women are very much, and basically the whole of that church set up is very male dominated, it is all about commitment, men serving the Lord. […] Possibly, I mean at the end of the day I think you will always have women who taught the Bible, but it might have been with other women to children, whereas today it is not, you know, it is perfectly, it seems to be acceptable and understandable if a woman gets up and preaches in the morning, to a whole mixed [congregation], but I think women have always done the same roles, they have always done the same things. There would have been women who understood the scriptures as well, but they just would have used their gifting in a more low key way. Whereas today, women are getting a chance to actually use their teaching gifts in a more mixed setting or in a more high profile.'

(UK maj-min 2; **Pentecostal 2)**

The Pentecostal interviewees acknowledge the influence of the women's movement, but they also point to strong, female individuals within the Pentecostal movement who have challenged the male-dominated movement. Yet, some of the interviewees also described the Pentecostal movement as fundamentalist and as male-dominated.

One interviewee from Norway says that her congregation has been through a process were they have accepted that men and women are equals, and she thinks that the women's movement has had an impact on the congregation. However, the women's movement has not affected her personally. She has made her choices based on the full picture in the family, and in her opinion society had been better if more people and society as a whole considered the full picture more, not just me, me, me. Of course the men have to be willing to think about the whole picture too. Men and women have to be equals [*likeverdige*], but you have to be generous [*raus*] and flexible and do more at home for some time, and then more at work later.

Some of the women from the Pentecostal congregation in Norway questioned the definition of 'the women's movement'. They associated more closely with organisations like *Jesus Women* (*Jesuskvinner)* or 'Aglow', which are organisations for Christian women. These organisations stress women's qualities. They do not call themselves feminist.

Sunni women

> *'It [the women's movement] has been important. […] Women work more now than they used to. In general, women have advanced in society. Maybe it wasn't like that earlier. And that's important! [...] But I also find it interesting to look at Islamic history, in comparison, to look at the women's movement and women's right to vote and so on. But then I think that all those rights are actually there originally [in Islam]. There hasn't been a women's movement in Islam, you might say. One hasn't demanded those rights. But in my opinion they ARE there. Women do have the right to vote and so on. [...] Maybe these rights have disappeared, maybe they have been misused, but in a way they ARE there. For instance when you talk about women and education, Muslim women and education, some might question that. But then I think about the Prophet's wife who was a business woman. [...] Nobody questioned her right to have an education. […] So I feel that those rights have been gone and then suddenly they are coming back. Maybe in connection with the*

women's movement? That maybe those rights in the religion haven't been made visible or people don't know about them or … well, I don't know.'

(Norway min-maj 1, C1)

'My religion has originally given women many rights. It says so in the Qur'an. But it's a male-dominated society, right?'

(Norway min-maj 2; C2)

Like the Christian interviewees, the Sunni Muslim women in our data material also underline the important role of the women's movement in advancing women's rights. But in contrast to the Christian interviewees, they put more emphasis on the basic rights for women within their own religion. The women's movement has contributed to women's position in society today, but they argue that women are already well respected within Islam. Women's rights, however, seem to have been somewhat lost over the years, and men have not followed the Qur'an the way they were meant to do. In their view, the women's movement has, in a way, contributed to rediscover women's rights.

Some of the Muslim participants shared the view that the women's movement has had no influence on Islam. For example, a Sunni woman in the UK had the view that Islam has not been affected by the women's movement and argued that once the Islamic teachings are followed, she is comfortable with any social changes. She argued:

'Nobody will be able to change it, nothing has changed. Islam is Islam and people who are good Muslims they always abide, they go by the Qur'an and Hadiths. So that doesn't change. So I don't think it [the women's movement] has any influence on Islam itself. But they are to do whatever they want to do, that is fine according if they are balancing Islam and their work, so I don't think there is a problem really.'

(UK min-maj 2; **Sunni 2)**

This respondent from the UK seems to view Islamic teachings as fixed and unchangeable, but she is prepared to open up for social changes as long as the Islamic teachings are followed.

The Sunni women also bring in a wider international context, and refer to women's movements in other parts of the world which are not that free compared to the situation of the women's movement in countries such as Norway. Women's

movements in Norway, Spain and the UK have many opportunities to demand their rights, and women in these countries are regarded as having a strong position in society. Several of the interviewees express a hope for women in the rest of the world as well, especially in Muslim countries; a hope that they will start to understand religion in the right way and that their rights will be acknowledged.

Some of the interviewees also argue that the women's movement has had an influence in their lives and on their mosque. Sunni interviewees in Norway describe the mosque as 'not conservative' and say that they arrange seminars about women's rights and about femaleness. They also stress that there is a new generation of Muslims in Norway where both girls and boys respect each other when they get married and they share responsibility equally. Women are not being beaten by their husbands or by men in the family, and if that happens they know where to turn to for help. The women's organisation in the mosque will participate in demonstrations for women's rights, and they have demonstrated for women's right to wear the hijab.

Shia women

Interviewer:	*'What about your own personal life and faith - has the women's movement influenced you in any way?'*
Norway min-min 1 (D1):	*'[...] Well. Not directly, but indirectly I think so. I think it is the teachings of Islam which have influenced the way I think.'*

Some of the Shia women also suggest that the women's movement has had an indirect effect on their lives. One interviewee says that she has been influenced by the women's movement due to her growing up in the Western society. 'My daily life would probably have been different if it wasn't for the women's movement', she claims (Norway min-min 4; D4). She also points to the situation in her country of origin, where the leaders recently have reinterpreted parts of the Qur'an in a more women friendly way and have given women more rights. She does not know if that is because of the women's movement, but in her opinion it has affected society which in turn has influenced the leaders.

Other Shia women echo the sentiments of some of the Sunni women, and forwarded the view that any changes in gender relations, such as working women or the quest for gender equality, must not be interpreted as changes in the religion. In response to the question of whether the women's movement has had any effects on her faith, a Shia woman from the UK stated:

> *'Affected Islam, not in, not in, I don't think so. Not unless of course those who sort of just look in one direction and say, women have to sit at home and don't do anything. I guess for those it could, but what about the right of the woman and again it is the men who would say that. The woman should be just as free as men, just as equal. Because again I believe, I mean that really comes to me that we are all, each individual is God's creation so God has something there. I can't say I am better than you or you are better, you know, you are no good because my family is better. Because your colour is different. But God has created all of us, woman, ugly, beautiful, there must be a reason behind it. But we are all God's creation and it is God, it is not so much the religion. Religion is there, but it has put me a lot closer to God if you know what I mean, I see God a lot more than Islam.'*
>
> (UK min-min 5; **Shia 5)**

The women's movement is not seen, by this Shia participant, as having impacted on Islam; rather, she emphasises that Islam already allows for gender equality and women's right to work.

6.7 Opposing or identifying with the women's movement and with feminism

Although the women's movement was mainly viewed by our respondents as having had a positive impact on women's rights, equal opportunities, and women's empowerment, several interviewees thought that the women's movement and feminism have 'gone too far' or are 'too extreme'. As the quotes in this section demonstrate, similar opinions were found among religious women in all three countries. In particular, many religious women, be they Christian or Muslim, suggested that women's movements and feminists promote the notion of female superiority and female domination, rather than gender equality. In this section we first present views found among religious women in Norway, then go on to present views found among religious women in the UK and Spain, respectively.

6.7.1 Religious women in Norway

> *'I think that it [the women's movement] has been important, but at a certain point it has gone too far. Because […] in some ways I think that the man is lagging behind. We've been too concerned with our own liberation. And then it's no balance. I don't think that's good for anyone in the long run.'*
>
> (Norway maj-min 2; B2)

> *'I think it [the women's movement] has been very important. But sometimes I think that women have lost something – about being women, to be women. You kind of become a "woman-man" [kvinnemenn]'.*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 3; A3)

The first quote addresses women's fight for liberation and the view expressed here is that women's liberation has been achieved, and that men have been forgotten. The interviewee exemplifies her point by referring to how a father is the weak party after a divorce. The second quote also indicates that the women's movement has gone too far by pointing at women who has lost their 'woman-ness' in the fight for equal rights. Women are almost becoming men, she argues. The interviewee elaborates this point by referring to 'hard' women; women without tenderness and compassion (A3). Another interviewee seconds this view by saying that:

> *'It's nice that people care about other people's rights and so on, but it gets a bit silly when you try to be a man. I don't want to generalise, but bra burning and things like that are kind of silly. But in some cases it's legitimate.'*
>
> (Norway min-min 4; D4)

The interviewees seem to have an ambivalent attitude towards the women's movement; on the one hand they have a positive view and express gratitude for what the women's movement's has achieved concerning women's rights, equal pay, and gender equality. The women do not personally identify with the women's movement and they do not associate their religious communities with the women's movement, but they are all indirectly influenced by it. On the other hand, they disapprove of the women's movement in some respects, and claim that it has 'gone too far' or is 'a bit extreme'. However, extreme might sometimes be necessary in order to make issues visible, one interviewee argues. One example of the 'extreme' women's movement is the radical feminist group *Ottar*. But they also mention issues which they label 'extreme', such as lesbian adoption, kindergartens at any cost and women in the

labour market at any cost. Other issues they mention as negative are free abortion and the new Marriage Act.[93]

On the other hand, one interviewee points out that the fight for women's rights has opened these issues up for debate. Today, it is fairly acceptable to choose different solutions for instance concerning child care.

The interviewees differentiate between the general fight for women's rights (equal rights with men) and the more extreme part of the women's movement which they associate more closely with feminism:

> *'[…] in the public debate it [feminism] is often used about the extreme. That is feminism as those who are on the barricades and who have the most extreme opinions. But for me, feminism would be more focused on women's need to have equal rights as men. The more general fights for women's rights.'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 6; A6)

Several interviewees in Norway also associated feminism either with women who are 'trying to be like men', or with women who are allegedly 'against men', and both of these types of women are viewed negatively.

> *'I mostly think about being feminine, like a lady. Feminist, that makes me think more about a manly woman almost. No, I don't know. But I do understand that there has been a struggle. But me personally, I've always felt that I've been seen. [...] I've been able to be the person I am, to do what I've wanted to do.'*
>
> (Norway maj-min 1); B1)

Some interviewees have the impression that feminists are women who are behaving almost like men and that they have lost some feminine qualities in the struggle for equal rights. There is also an image of the feminist movement being against men and feminists who want to make two different teams; one with women and one with men. This view is in line with the statements seen earlier about feminism which 'has gone too far' and is 'extreme'. Both Christian and Muslim women in Norway distance

[93] Amendments in The Marriage Act were enacted by the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) 17. June 2008. The amendments came into force on 1 January 2009. The amendments give lesbians and gay men the right to enter marriage on the same basis as heterosexuals. See http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/bld/Topics/homosexuality/a-marriage-act-for-all--entering-into-fo.html?id=509376&epslanguage=en-GB.

themselves from the kind of feminists who ‘wanted to figure out how to get power over men’.

6.7.2 Religious women in the UK

Some of our interviewees in the UK shared the opinion that the feminist agenda is to dominate men; some Muslim and Christian participants objected to such an agenda. A Pentecostal woman in the UK alleged that feminism is about the control of men, she said:

> *‘Feminism to me means, the words that I associate with that are more like people who, almost like, they would like women to be the dominant species and men to be down here. That men are only there to be used for when they need them, to produce children, etc. I just think of images of women burning bras and all this sort of freedom to an extreme, where there is no moral conviction. You can do whatever you want. It is sort of get freedom and run with it and do whatever you want to do.’*
>
> (UK maj-min 2; **Pentecostal 2)**

She associates feminism with women who want to control men and the advocacy of liberal ideas that are de-coupled from any moral conviction.

A second Pentecostal interviewee in the UK was also of the opinion that current feminist have an agenda to dominate men. She argued:

> *‘I read an interesting article in the paper at the weekend about a new appointment at Westminster she was all for the men staying at home and everything. She is obviously quite a militant feminist. I am not sure but obviously she feels there is a place for that. But it is interesting that was once fighting for equality might now have crossed over the line into fighting for dominance. Do you see what I mean? I think in some spheres that is the case. There are feminists that were not content with equality but want dominance.’*
>
> (UK maj-min 5; **Pentecostal 5)**

This interviewee implies that the idea that a man should take on caring roles in the home is characteristic of a militant feminist view. Her comments also reveal another example of the influence of the media in shaping the perception of the feminist movement. She believes feminists want to dominate men.

One Sunni interviewee from the UK disliked the idea of 'women trying to be men'. She thinks feminists take on male characteristics, which she does not endorse. She said:

> *'I don't think I would go with the feminist movement, because I just think that they probably want to be more like men.'*
>
> (UK min-maj 4; **Sunni 4)**

Some participants in the UK were also of the view that the concept of feminism draws women away from morality and godliness. For example, a Pentecostal woman had the opinion that feminism is about elevating the status of women higher than that of men, which was perceived as ungodly. She argued:

> *'There is an element of male-bashing in it. I think it is ungodly, it is ungodly from the point of view that it is not just about elevating women, it is about putting men down as much as it is about elevating women, and that is the unfortunate aspect of it. I understand why some women might feel that they have had to get extreme, I don't know if feminists see themselves as extreme, [...] But I think it is remarkably counterproductive, there has been a net backlash to it and I think it has caused a lot of men to be dishonest about how they feel and how they interact with women. So, on the one hand, they look as though they are being conciliatory, they look as though they are giving the women opportunities, but on the other hand they are sitting behind closed doors and putting invisible barriers in the way. In that respect, if you look, I think the old boys' networks and old boys' clubs, women are excluded from so many of the higher echelons of things, so I think there has been a backlash, I think in many quarters feminists aren't taken seriously, and I think for the majority of women they are too extreme. I think they lose a lot of women on the way.'*
>
> (UK maj-min 4; **Pentecostal 4)**

This interviewee seems to suggest that there is a backlash against feminism in its extreme form, and that men continue to dominate but behind closed doors, implying that men are still in control. A case can thus still be made for fighting for women's inclusion. She is also saying that there are no reasons why women and men should not perform the same roles in church, in society and in the family. This indicates that she embraces the advocacy of feminists on gender equality.

Similarly, an Anglican participant had the view that the feminist agenda is too radical, she said:

> *'I think it rather means that a lot of women are going overboard the wrong way. I like to be treated as a woman and I think that a woman does have a place that is different from that of a man. And it is only when it comes to actually using the skills that you have been given, as, you know, a gift from God, that if you are denied the ability to use those gifts, then there is something wrong in the relationship. I think despite that, you know, there are differences between men and woman and we should respect those differences.'*
>
> (UK maj-min 2; **Anglican 2)**

On the one hand she sees the differences between women and men as God given, but on the other hand any denial of opportunities for women raises problems.

From the UK responses, it was also evident that some participants did not understand the word 'feminism'. Their lack of understanding could be attributed to English as the second language of some of the ethnic minority participants in our study. Therefore, the researcher had to explain what the concept meant by saying 'feminism is about the advocacy of women's agenda'. One participant commented by saying:

> *'When God created woman, feminism is with us. You cannot separate feminism from woman. Woman is born feminine, when you say woman you mean feminine. A female. Why we say female, because feminism is there. […] She has more attraction, more colourful, more entertaining probably. Feminism to me is not stopping me going into any profession or stopping me in my practical life. I can be more feminine and be practical as well.'*
>
> (UK min-min 3; **Shia 3)**

Her comment suggests that her understanding of the concept is how to be feminine, and that women should not be denied equal opportunities on the labour market or in other spheres of life because of their gender.

The UK interviewees' talk about feminism focuses on the rights of women and the perceived freedom achieved for women. Some participants had the opinion that the liberal ideas advocated by feminist were ungodly, and that the concept of feminism is being used inappropriately to undermine men. This raised the question whether the freedom to participate in all spheres of life can, in some ways, be seen as

detrimental to women's own interests. Also, the findings indicate that the discourse on feminism forwarded by our research participants included negative connotations. It was generally acknowledged that the feminist movement has obtained a lot for women, but a majority of our interviewees still shared the opinion that the concept of feminism has unwanted 'baggage'.

Further, the analysis of the UK interviews revealed few differences in the ways feminism is talked about; however, a distinct difference we identified was linked to how feminism was talked about as an agenda for female dominance. Many Christian participants shared the opinion that the agenda of feminists is moving towards matriarchy, this suggests that agendas which are perceived to seek control over men, rather than promoting gender equality, are not readily embraced by religious women. The UK women's movement therefore has a task in communicating with religious women about its goal to promote gender equality rather than the dominance of women over men. Interviewees reveal a very narrow understanding of feminism as only a small minority of feminists have advocated women's superiority over men. Most feminists have argued the equal value and equal rights of women and men in order to challenge to subordination of women.

6.7.3 Religious women in Spain

The views about feminism reflected in the interviews with religious women in Spain are quite diverse. The majority of interviewees in Spain do not see themselves as feminists at all. Some women also 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 had influenced or 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. However, a few research participants also expressed a cautiously positive view of feminism, but respondents were, on the whole, more positive when talking about the achievements of women's movements than they were when talking about 'feminism'.

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. A Sunni woman emphasised that while gender equality might be good, female superiority is not:

> *'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 is 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 1; Maj_Min_01)

At other times, the reasons underlying opposition to feminism have to do with gender roles. Feminism is sometimes is 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. An interviewed Catholic woman associated the women's movement with extremism:

> *'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.'*
>
> (Spain maj-maj 1; 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 the Pentecostal interviewee quoted below 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 …'.*
>
> (Spain maj_min 4; Min_Maj_04)

The same Pentecostal 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.'*
> (Spain maj_min 4; Min_Maj_04)

Her testimony signals a somewhat passive attitude. She describes how she rebels inside against certain unfair situations (e.g., violence against women) but then she seems to refrain from doing 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.'*
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

This participant regrets that Muslim women have lost their alleged 'original status', namely the special status they enjoy by traditional Islam - i.e., women should be treasured; they have a right to be protected and 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 have been demonstrated 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].'*
> (Spain maj-maj 1; Maj_Maj_01)

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

Some interviewees have, however, a more positive 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 4; Maj_Maj_04)

Thus this testimony illustrates the notion 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_maj 4; Maj_Maj_04)

Other interviewees see a distinction between the social accomplishments of feminism and more extreme ideas associated with the movement. The Pentecostal 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' and largely irrelevant to contemporary women's lives. She discusses and positions herself against abortion, divorce, non-marital sex 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 1; 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.'*
>
> (Spain maj_min 1; Min_Maj_01)

One interviewee from the Pentecostal 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 of the Dominican Republic and the story seems surrounded by a halo of an epic tale (first quote below). However when asked about feminism (second quote below) she actually 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 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, at the time women did not study … So, what I want to convey is that, to me, all that was very important.'

(Spain maj_min 3; 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 others 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.'

(Spain maj_min 3; Min_Maj_03)

It seems that our research 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 Sunni Muslim expressed quite progressive views on gender roles and spent some time describing how she dealt with gender inequality in her childhood home and how she set out to change it. She was aware that she behaved 'like a feminist'. Her understanding of feminism is more positive than that of 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 they image that predominates. So, I had a lot of fights 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.'

(Spain min_maj 2; 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 gender equality rather than female superiority.

The same Sunni Muslim 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

In this example she did not demand the right to arrive home later than her brother (i.e., 'female superiority') but rather, to 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 apparently benevolent feelings may 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_maj 2; Maj_Min_02)

This Shia participant also 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 2; Min_Min_02)

However, the same respondent argues she has not been influenced by feminism – apart from 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].'*
>
> (Spain min_min 2; Min_Min_02)

The same Shia participant also mentions the global importance of feminist movements, but at the same time she seems to suggest that such movements can go 'too far' or become 'too extreme':

> *'[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 "shestory" 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 …'*
>
> (Spain min_min 2; 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, a Shia participant, values the work of government institutions like the Women's Institute in Spain, especially the work it does to support women in the

labour market. However, she also wants to distance herself from the label 'feminist', as she feminists as being 'too extremist':

> *'I think there are many women circles that have tried to improve things such as the Women'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 Women'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 adverts that I was against too. […] Buy I am not at all in favour or feminist circles, I think they are hurt more than help.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; Min_Min_05)

Another Shia participant holds more 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 they are a bit far from me because I never participated.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 3; 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)

A further Muslim 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. The second quote below suggests 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; 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.'*
>
> (Spain min_min 5; Min_Min_05)

6.8 'A feminist – I?'

The impression of feminism as narrow and exclusive, or as 'too extreme' points to a perception of feminism as 'one thing'; the interviewees rarely talk about different feminisms. When the interviewees were asked whether they would call themselves feminists, most of them would not, but the answers opened up for more diverse views of feminism. For example, one respondent referred to 'people that are more feminists than I am', indicating that there is a continuum of being more or less feminist:

> *Interviewer:* *'What does the word feminism mean to you? What do you think about or what do you associate with that word?'*
> *D1:* *'[...] Justice, maybe? Gender equality […]'*
> *Int:* *'Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?'*
> *D1:* *'[…] I've seen people that are more feminists than I am. [...] I haven't spoken out and demanded … [...] But I have influenced myself to think in feministic ways. But I've seen others who have demanded it, and I can't compare with them ... […] 'Feminist light' (laughter).'*
>
> *'I never use that word [feminist] to describe myself, no. I associate 'feminist' with someone who fight for women's rights in all areas, and I don't feel that I fight for women's rights in all areas.'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 1; A1)

These quotes emphasise a view of feminists as activists who actively demand women's rights in all areas of life. Compared to such women, the interviewees quoted here say that they cannot call themselves feminists. They feel that they are too passive. However, they sympathise with demands for justice and gender equality, and one of the women quoted here says that she can call herself 'feminist light'.

A majority of the participants in all three countries did not want to be labelled feminist mainly for its negative connotations and not for what it has achieved for women, whilst others preferred to take a cautious distance. A few participants, on the other hand, were happy to be associated with the achievements of feminists, and were not influenced by any negative connotations.

Several of the interviewees found it difficult to call themselves feminists because the term has negative connotations:

> *'It feels strange to state that "I'm a feminist". But at the same time, I don't find it hard to identify with any of the standpoints. So it's more the categorisation, that I would possibly be a bit careful with, in other settings as well. To become a spokesperson for just one point of view. [...] In this profession I'm very concerned with acknowledging both sides of an issue, to see the nuances. So it would be difficult for me to be put in the same category as someone with extreme statements. Because then some other group would be overlooked.'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 6; A6)

This quote illustrates a view of the label 'feminist' which considered having a negative connotation to the extreme forms of feminism. This view of feminism as one-sided is in line with the view of feminism as narrow and exclusive.

Another Norwegian interviewee also addresses the negative label which has been put on feminism. She argues that feminism can be both positive and negative. She is opposed to the kind of feminism which is against men and in favour of free abortion, but she is positive to a feminism that demands that women should be heard and have the same rights as men. If the last meaning of feminism is feminism, then she can call herself a feminist. However, she does not participate in feminist marches and she finds 'feminism' to be a difficult category.

Some of the participants did not want to be labelled feminist because they associated it with lesbianism. One UK Pentecostal commented on her experience with a feminist:

> *'No, I am not a feminist, I don't like that word feminism I just, […]. I think often women who are gay, because I actually minister to a woman who is quite a strong feminist and a lesbian and I actually thought, I actually felt she had a lot of bondages, she had a lot of confusion, she had a lot of negative feelings towards men, she had a lot of distorted images in her head. She wasn't balanced, she wasn't a free woman at all.'*
>
> (UK maj-min 2; **Pentecostal 2)**

So her view of what is an inappropriate sexual relationship for a woman, lesbianism, influences her view of feminism. A very similar view was expressed by a Catholic respondent from Spain, who acknowledged there are some aspects of the women's

movement that she agrees with, but she immediately focused on issues that she is not in favour of. Also, instead of talking about homosexuality broadly she focused specifically 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 is just wanting to be the focus of attention.'*
>
> (Spain maj-maj 1; **Maj_Maj_01)**

The quotes above suggests that religious values are sometimes constructed as being in opposition to feminist values, especially if feminist values are associated with non-heterosexual practices.

A Shia participant from the UK also associated feminism with lesbianism, which she argued is unacceptable in Islam. Yet she acknowledged the achievement of suffrage and equal pay by feminists. She stated:

> *'No, no way. […] The connotations are rather strident, […], very sort of like out there and I am afraid you get a lot of connotations with lesbianism, which is something that is so abhorrent to us, we hate that so much, that would be a big thing. Because feminism seems to be, they seem to go together. I mean I may be totally wrong but that is what I have picked up, how I feel you know. I mean equal pay, voting yes that sounds good, all women should want that. But it depends how far you want to go.'*
>
> (UK min-min 4; **Shia 4)**

The interviewee is constructing a collective Muslim 'we', which allegedly is unified in its view of lesbianism as a sin. Yet, there are of course many Muslim homosexuals, but their sexuality, or rather other people's view of their sexuality, might undermine their sense of belonging within the Muslim community (Haqq, 2000; Yip, 2008). Also, on one hand, she associates feminism with lesbianism and it being something bad; on the other hand she associates feminism with 'good' things like women's right to vote and equal pay. The responses associating feminism with lesbianism, suggests a labelling of advocates for the political and social rights of women as advocates of sexual preferences.

Some participants were, however, undecided if they would like to be labelled as feminists or not. Although they identified with the movement in its advancement of women's rights, they had the opinion that there were too many prejudices associated with the concept of feminism. For example, a Shia participant from the UK preferred terms such as 'women's rights' and 'gender equality', and said she does not like to be called 'feminist':

> *'No. Not so much, no, to be honest, no. I don't know, sometimes I think it depends on what subject you are looking at. I don't want it to be too much, you know, if it goes too far I think perhaps not. Even though I am for women, I mean if I see if there is a family, I would always stick up for the woman. Perhaps you could call me feminist, but I don't like to be, I just like to have the right. It depends I suppose from the men's point of view, they might say I am, but I don't think, I just like the rights and equality.'*
>
> (UK min-min 5; **Shia 5)**

Some of the other comments from the UK respondents were:

> *'There are negative associations with that word, but I would like to fight for women's rights, put it like this. Feminism has negative associations, I don't like that.'*
>
> (UK min-min 6; **Shia 6)**

> *'Because I am kind of saying, you know, I am not burning my bra, I am not what have you. And yet, on the other foot in so many ways, actually I am, because I rejoice in what I am able to do and allowed to do and what I am, and what my other women do. And by the nature of the fact I am a woman, I guess I do identify with it. It is tough, I hope this is useful, […].'*
>
> (UK maj-maj 3; **Anglican 3)**

> *'I think in some ways our religion is very feminist, because it does promote women's rights and it fights for women's rights and it says, you know, you have these rights. It is very pro-women in that respect. But I don't know, feminism it has just got bad press I think, it has got a lot of negative connotations now.'*
>
> (UK min-maj 4; **Sunni 4)**

This interviewee thinks that Islam promotes the rights of women, and even suggests that Islam is a feminist religion. At the same time, however, she notes that the concept of feminism has been given a bad image by the press.

The comments by these women, Christian and Muslim, reveal that the rejection of or scepticism towards the label 'feminist' is primarily because it has been given a bad

image in the media. The women are giving support to the feminist agenda of women's rights, but are also careful to distance themselves from the label 'feminist'.

6.9 Christian and Muslim feminism

Some of the participants in our study had, on the other hand, a strong, positive conviction on the concept of feminism and were willing to be labelled as such. A positive identification with the label 'feminism' could be found among both Christian and Muslim women. One Anglican responded:

> *'As a feminist? Yes, I wouldn't mind being described as a feminist. I have always thought of myself as being one … Because I don't see why women should be less than men. And I think before the 1960s or that kind of era, they were subsidiary. During the war they weren't, women and men were very equal, because men went off to fight and women did all the work in the factories and what have you. And then the men came back and took over everything again. And the poor little women had to go back to being nice housekeepers. And that I don't think was right. So yes, I would like to think of myself as a feminist. That is why I admire people like Pankhurst, the Suffragettes, who fought for the vote for women, I think they are excellent women, strong women.'*
>
> (UK maj-maj 4; **Anglican 4)**

Thus for this participant, feminism meant equal voting rights and equal opportunities in the labour market. Another Anglican participant had the view that she did not deserve to be called feminist as compared to what other women had achieved, but would like to be labelled as such. However, she also mentioned that the label feminist might not be a compliment but used rather as a derogatory word. She said:

> *'I am not sure I kind of justify being identified as a feminist in some ways, when I think about what other women have done, but yes I don't mind it if people call me a feminist, even if it is obvious they mean it in an insulting way, I think it is a good thing to be.'*
>
> (UK maj-maj 6; **Anglican 6)**

This interviewee indicates she would like to be called feminist irrespective of its negative image.

Some of the Christian women in Norway also expressed more positive attitudes towards the label 'feminist':

> *'[…] I would call myself a feminist in the meaning that I want women to have a voice, not to be inferior or subordinate, but equals and be able to occupy an equal space in the centre as men. […] The Liberation movement [based on Liberation theology] focuses on the poor, while I think about women as marginalised and in this centre – periphery perspective.'*
>
> (Norway maj-maj 5; A5)

> *'I haven't decided whether I'm a feminist or not. [...] I haven't really thought about it. Maybe because I haven't had a reason to do so. Or maybe because I don't feel that there are rights that I don't have. [...] Now I don't see the need to call myself a feminist. Who knows? Maybe in a few years I will?'*
>
> (Norway min-maj 1; C1)

Similar to the Christian women quoted above, some Muslim women were also happy to be identified with feminism. For example, a Sunni participant from the UK had the opinion that feminists are women who do not follow stereotypical roles, and she was comfortable being labelled as feminist because she valued independence. She stated:

> *'I am a person that does my own thing, I come and go and please myself. I am feminist in a way, I am my own person. Men don't say you have to do this, you have to do that, I do what I want to do.'*
>
> (UK min-maj 2; **Sunni 2)**

An interviewed Muslim woman in Norway said, 'I support women's rights, but I feel that I'm a feminist within certain boundaries' (Norway min-maj 3; C3). In her view some feminists do not have any boundaries or limitations. She calls these feminists 'extremists' because they see only one right way of being a woman. The interviewee wants to be respected for who she is; she has her own boundaries in addition to Islam's boundaries which regulate how she should behave. She would never dress in an inappropriate way that can attract men and she has certain duties towards her children and wants to stay home with them.

Overall, and across the three countries in our study, both Christian and Muslim participants were embracing women's rights and gender equality. Most of them preferred to distance themselves, however, from the label 'feminism'. Some participants displayed unease with the concept and rejected certain aspects which

they alleged belittled men. They associate some feminists with 'going too far', or being too radical, including bra-burning and lesbianism. The latter point, the association between feminism and lesbianism, was a problem for some as gay and lesbian relationships are seen as unacceptable from a religious point of view. This finding suggests that lesbian Christians or Muslims could find it difficult to make their sexual preferences known for fear of being excluded or discriminated against. Despite distancing themselves from the label 'feminism', many of the participants seem to embrace some fundamental parts of the feminist agenda, including women's right to vote, women's right to employment, equal pay for the same job, and women's right to education. A minority among our respondents were happy to be associated with the label 'feminism'.

6.10 Summary: Part B

Our findings indicate that religious women in Norway, Spain and the UK have ambivalent attitudes, including both positive and negative assessments, of the women's movement and of feminism.

On one hand, they have a positive view and express gratitude for what the women's movement's has achieved concerning women's rights, equal pay, and gender equality. Feminism and the women's movement were associated positively with women's rights and with women's empowerment. Both feminism and the women's movement were perceived to have positively changed gender relations in society, and to have positively contributed to the increased participation of women in education and politics. Women in our study also expressed clear support for women's equal rights and opportunities.

However, most of the interviewed women do not personally identify with the women's movement, and only a very few identify with the label 'feminist'. In their personal lives, the women's movement has had more of an indirect impact. The women's movement is seen to have had an indirect influence on their personal lives and on the situation for women within their religious communities. Despite not directly associating their religious communities with the women's movement, the interviewees nevertheless perceived their own religious communities to be indirectly

influenced by the women's movement. They all underline that a religious community is not isolated from the rest of society. Most of the interviewed women from different religious communities describe the women's movement as 'important'. The women's movement is perceived as having had a decisive role regarding an increased consciousness about women's rights, not just in Norway, Spain and the UK, but on a global scale as well. Women have been made aware of their rights; they are becoming stronger and demand mutual respect. The interviewees emphasise equal pay, gender equality and women's rights as human rights.

On the other hand, our interviewees disapprove of the women's movement in some respects, and claim that it has 'gone too far' or is 'a bit extreme'. The main achievements of the women's movement are seen as 'a thing of the past', with the current agenda being regarded by some as irrelevant or as bordering on matriarchy. Some are taking the achievements for granted and do not see a relevance of the women's movement and feminism today. A distinct finding was that many religious women are uneasy about the term 'feminism', mainly because of prejudices associated with the word, such as the notion that feminists are women who hate men or who want to dominate men, or that feminists support female supremacy and superiority. Our interviewees' impression of feminism as narrow and exclusive also points to a perception of feminism as 'one thing'; the interviewees rarely talk about different feminisms. This view of feminism as one-sided, rather than complex, is in line with the view of feminism as narrow and exclusive. However, the religious women in our study sympathise with demands for justice and gender equality, and some of them have a more positive view of feminism (like one of the women who says that she can call herself 'feminist light').

Moreover, many political issues that are associated with feminism and the women's movement are highly controversial among religious women, such as lesbian adoption, gay marriage, abortion, and divorce. Feminists are also viewed as unbalanced in their views on women's role in society – the idea that women *must* participate in the labour market and that children *must* receive childcare in nurseries and kindergartens is seen as inflexible in that it does not acknowledge women who might want to choose differently by taking care of their children at home.

The interviewees thus address feminism as too narrow and exclusive. Feminism is viewed as narrow in the sense that it only means liberation for women (and not for men), and possibly only for some women – women who 'want to be like men'. Some of the Muslim women in our study find feminists to be patronising and prejudiced against Muslim women. Feminists are viewed as holding the (unjust) assumption that a Muslim woman wearing a hijab (headscarf) is oppressed. This view is in line with the criticism of white, middle-class feminists by black and post-colonial feminists. Several of the Muslim interviewees perceive feminists as believing that there is only one right way of being a woman and that they do not respect women who are different or choose different lifestyles.

It is possible that an absence of a clearly identifiable and collective agenda of the women's movement, together with anti-religious or secular attitudes expressed by politicians and by media, and continued public discussions of highly contentious issues such as abortion, parenting and divorce, have influenced some of the participants' perceptions of feminism as 'extreme' or 'too radical'. There has also been a general backlash in society against feminism, combined with a widespread perception that gender equality has been achieved. These phenomena are also likely to have impacted on our interviewees' perceptions of feminism and the women's movement.

Many Muslim women in our study, like the Christian interviewees, underline the important role of the women's movement in advancing women's rights. But in contrast to the Christian interviewees, they put more emphasis on the basic rights for women that have been established within their own religion. While the women's movement is perceived as having contributed to women's position in society today, they also argue strongly that women already are, and have been, way before the onset of the women's movement in the West, well respected within Islam. For our respondents, women's rights seem, however, to have been somewhat lost over the years, and Muslim men are said to not follow or practice the Qur'an in the way they were meant to do regarding women's position and rights. In the view of some of the Muslim interviewees, the women's movement has in a way contributed to a rediscovery of already existing women's rights within Islam.

The Muslim interviewees bring in a wider international context, and refer to women's movements in other parts of the world which are not that free compared to the situation of women and women's movement in countries like Norway, Spain and the UK. Women's movements in European countries are perceived as having every opportunity to demand their rights, and women are seen as having a strong position in society. Several of the interviewees express a hope for women in the rest of the world as well, and especially women in Muslim countries; a hope that the religiously prescribed rights of women in Muslim countries will be acknowledged and supported.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introduction

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 organisations 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 behavior 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'.

7.2 Religion, identity and meaning

Religion plays a fundamental role in the lives of the women who participated in our study. The women's talk about what their religion means to them indicated that they attach a deep and significant meaning to the role of faith in their everyday life. All of our interviewees have a deeply personal relationship with their faith, and they have

clearly reflected a great deal about the meaning and importance of their faith. They attach a deep meaning of personal faith to their own relationship with God and to religious teachings, to their relationships with other people, and to their own situatedness and belonging within the larger community, including the nation in which they live.

Our study revealed that research participants displayed a 'plural integrated identity' (Østberg, 2003) and that they do a lot of 'identity work' (Anderson, 2000) when they talk about and present their own identity. Their religious identity was intertwined with their ethnic identity and geographical or national belonging. This was most clearly expressed by the ethnic minority women participants, who often expressed a hybrid identity with religious and cultural links to both the country they currently live in (Norway, Spain, or the UK) and their family's country of origin.

Moreover, our interviewees' construction of citizenship was based on a mixture of national status and cultural identity, the extent to which an individual participates within a community, and her feeling of belonging. Nearly all of the participants in our study expressed a great commitment to participation within organised religious contexts, and all of them imparted a notion of belonging to a religious community of believers. While at times the notion of belonging was related to a specific church or mosque, at other times it was related to the larger faith tradition (Christianity or Islam) to which they belong. Yet a third sense of belonging was expressed in relation to a joint community of believers across various faith traditions; that is, a sense of shared religious faith was invoked between Christians and Muslims, and between Christianity, Islam and other religions. Furthermore, participation and a sense of (not) belonging were also argued on the basis of ethnicity, where some ethnic minority women felt excluded or marginalised by the majority society. Thus for some of the women who participated in our study, their ethnic minority status at times made them feel marginalised in comparison with white, majoritised women. However, ethnic minority women expressed a deep-felt sense of belonging to their own ethnic and religious community. Organised religion provides them with a 'community of faith' and opportunities to participate in civic activities organised by their church or mosque.

7.3 Citizenship

To construct more inclusive forms of citizenship demands processes of change in all facets of society, including religious practices. In this study we have examined women's religious identities and practices, and how organised religion can provide women with a platform for exercising active citizenship. The analysis of the findings of our study revealed that participants' faith, within both Christian and Muslim faith traditions, structures and guides their way of life within the home and within their communities. A uniting characteristic among our interviewees is their focus on *religion as a way of life.* In this view, religious belief and rituals are not viewed as discrete spheres of thought and action, but as deeply intertwined with all areas of life, and as providing guiding principles and inspiration for how to live a good life. One difference we detected, however, is that Muslim women tend to focus on both specific religious prescriptions for behaviour and on general 'Islamic values', while Christian women tend to focus less on specific prescriptions for behaviour and more on what can be talked about as general 'Christian values' or attitudes. Some of the common values of both faith traditions, including respect for others and principles of good ethical behaviour, have, for example, been recognised by the UK government as contributory factors to social and community cohesion.[94] These findings therefore serve as a basis for us stating that by actively practicing a faith within organised religious contexts, women are also practising active citizenship.

In our study we found that Muslim women's participation in the religious arena tends to be more restricted and/or limited than Christian women's participation. One important issue was the allocation of space for women in Mosques to enable them to attend collective worship. In the case of absence of such space, Muslim women are in practice denied the opportunity to pray within organised or formal religious structures. It can, therefore, be argued that in situations where a designated space for women in the mosque is lacking, women's communal practice and participation within the context of organised religion is effectively restricted. However, in our study we also found an example of a gender-mixed prayer practice in a mosque,

[94] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/actionplan.pdf [accessed 8 April 2010].

which demonstrates that religious guidelines about gender relations can be interpreted in different and flexible ways.

We also observed that Christian women were active in church activities involving either the entire (gender-mixed) congregation or in activities involving women and children, whilst Muslim women were active in women-only activities. In comparison with the Christian women, the Muslim women had more limited roles of participation within their faith. There are more opportunities for women to lead gender-mixed worship and to teach in Christian congregations than in Muslim ones. However, Christian women have yet to obtain the right to hold all formal positions in churches. The role of bishops is still limited to men within the Anglican Church in Britain, whilst it is open to both women and men in the Lutheran State Church in Norway. In the Catholic Church in Spain, women are prevented from being ordained as priests or as bishops altogether. Moreover, in denominations that are positive towards the ordination of women, women are yet to obtain full parity with men (e.g., there are more ordained male clergy than female clergy). As religion provides women with an important platform for participation, a relevant question is if Muslim women's participation will continue to be restricted to women-only activities, or if Muslim women over time will be allowed to participate in gender-mixed activities within the mosque. In our study, we have found that a specific mosque in Norway has informally opened up for women's quiet joining in with men during the Imam's preaching. Beyond the context of our case-study, an important development in this regard is also the high profile leading of gender-mixed Friday worship by the American female Professor Amina Wadud in New York in 2005 and in Oxford, UK in 2008. Moreover, Muslim women in various European contexts are increasingly taking on various leadership roles within mosques (see Nyhagen Predelli, 2008).

The notion 'religious citizenship' was new to our respondents; they had not thought about religion before in relation to citizenship. However, many of them found that it would make sense to talk about religion in relation to citizenship as *practice and belonging*, as their faith-based community participation and activism would be an example of. To be a good citizen and a 'good Christian' and a 'good Muslim' was basically the same for our interviewees: they include showing love and care, respect and tolerance, and taking active part in community contexts. We found that the

interviewees' understanding of the notion of religious citizenship also included a specifically religious notion of an other-worldly context. They talked about citizenship both within this-worldly communities (here on earth), and within the other-worldly context of 'heaven'. Both Christian and Muslim women emphasised that all human beings are equal before God. When related to other-worldly contexts, however, it could be said that citizenship in 'heaven' or in 'God's kingdom' entails a non-inclusive dimension in that non-believers are regarded as excluded.

In a similar vein to how citizenship was talked about in more general terms, religious citizenship was also understood in terms of status, participation and belonging. In terms of status, some of our interviewees revealed a tension between the ideal notion that all religions should be treated on equal terms, and the fear that any talk about 'religious citizenship' could imply in practice that religions were treated differently, with some religions being discriminated against. Yet another dimension of religious citizenship concerns the treatment and participation of women within various faith traditions, and the interviewed women in our study emphasised how their religions allowed them rights as women, and opportunities to participate. Some interviewees seemed to think about *legal* status in connection with the term 'religious citizenship', while others were more concerned with how people of different religions perceive each other in terms of participation and belonging. Hence, religious citizenship was not only perceived as a means to ensure equality between faiths within the community, but also as an abstract construct which could potentially create increased divisions between religions. It therefore seems that any conceptualisation of religious citizenship should emphasise the equal status and opportunities of all religions and of all believers within various faith traditions, together with issues of participation and belonging.

7.4 Gender equality, feminism, and the women's movement

In our study we also asked about the notion of gender equality in terms of how the women themselves understood the term. References to explanations based on biological differences, and ideals of complementary gender roles and the equal value of women's and men's roles, are main findings in the interviews with women from all the different religious communities in all three countries. However, in addition to

asserting such differences between women and men, most of the interviewees also emphasised that men and women should have the same opportunities in society, and that women's rights and empowerment should be supported.

Participants' responses on the relevance of gender equality within their respective faiths focused on the alleged 'nature' of men and women, and the functionally distinct roles that were deemed appropriate for women and men (Lehman, 1994). For the interviewed women, gender equality was thus presented within the context of complementary gender roles, where women and men have equal value, regardless of the role they are set to play. The Muslim women in our study referred to the Qur'an in order to legitimate the ideal of complementary gender roles, and emphasised the woman's main role as caretaker and the man's role as family provider. Muslim women thus highlighted complementary gender roles as religiously prescribed. Christian women, on the other hand, did not similarly refer to the Bible or Christianity when they talked about gender roles. Moreover, some of the Christian women in our study were concerned that feminism could 'go too far', or be 'too extreme', and they were keen to avoid the disempowerment of men alongside the empowerment of women. Thus, the issue of gender equality has different relevance to religious women depending on their context.

We asked our interviewees to reflect on whether or not they had experienced any constraints on their citizenship practice. Among interviewed women in the UK, constraints were mainly attributed to the legal status of the individual (being a citizen or not). However, this aspect only affected ethnic minority participants, irrespective of their religious affiliation. As researchers, we identified a further constraint to citizenship practice embedded in rules regarding women's roles and participation in churches and mosques ('internal restrictions'). Any limitations on women's roles in religious contexts can be interpreted as constraints on their right to practice gender equal citizenship. The religiously prescribed roles and behaviour affect the extent of women's active participation, but more so for Muslim than for Christian women. As stated above, Christian women have more opportunities to hold leadership roles for adult gender-mixed groups within their churches, although in some contexts they still do not have access to certain leadership roles, such as that of bishops in the Church of England, or that of priests or bishops in the Catholic Church in Spain. Muslim

women can also hold certain leadership roles, but these are limited to either women-only groups or to gender-mixed groups of children. Moreover, as a rule, Muslim women are not allowed to lead gender-mixed prayer. In relation to activities outside the churches or mosques, however, we found few indications in the data material that there were differences between opportunities enjoyed by Christian and by Muslim women. Nevertheless, some of our Muslim interviewees imparted that they feel constrained by what they perceive as the larger society's stereotypical views of Muslim women as oppressed from within their own communities. These interviewees highlighted that their own sense of womanhood and personhood differed greatly from such stereotypes, and that the continued display of such stereotypes in the media function to exclude Muslim women from full participation and hence from enjoying full citizenship. Some ethnic minority women also identified their ethnicity as a constraint for citizenship practice, because they do not feel accepted or understood by the majority ethnic group. Yet the religious organisations in which they are active provided a space where they felt a sense of belonging and could participate at different levels in issues of their interest which often extends to the larger community.

We have also explored whether religious women who attend churches and mosques have been influenced by women's movements, and whether feminism is relevant to their lives. As mentioned above, the interviewed women acknowledged a positive impact from the women's movement on women's rights and opportunities, especially in relation to equal pay, gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment. However, despite the positive view of these aspects of the women's movement, few interviewees identified with feminism, and many viewed feminists as having 'gone too far' or being 'too extreme'. This is related to the impression many of the interviewed women have of the feminist movement as wanting women to 'become like men' or to 'take over from men', or of it allegedly supporting a notion of female supremacy and superiority. However, the religious women in our study sympathise with demands for justice and gender equality, and some of them have a more positive view of feminism.

Christian women in our study viewed the women's movement as having contributed to changes within churches related to the fact that women now play more prominent

and recognised roles in churches. For example, the legal ban on female priests in the Norwegian State Church was abolished in 1956, and the first female priest was ordained in 1961. The first female bishop in the Norwegian State Church was appointed in 1993. In the UK, women were welcomed to the priesthood in the Anglican Church in 1992, and a debate is currently taking place in the Anglican Church whether to allow the ordination of women bishops. Officials in the Catholic Church, represented at the highest level by the Pope, remain adamantly opposed to any talk about the ordination of women. In comparison to these developments, the Pentecostal Church *Assemblies of God* ordained its first woman clergy at the time of its founding in 1914.

Furthermore, both Christian and Muslim women in our study viewed the women's movement as having impacted on socio-cultural practices and values regarding gender relations in the family and in society at large. Most of our participants viewed the movement as having positively contributed to women's roles in politics and in the labour market. Although some interviewees highlighted the positive contributions resulting from women taking on leadership roles, some also expressed concern that women should 'take over' *all* leadership roles from men. In relation to the family, our interviewees expressed both positive and negative views on the impact of the women's movement. For example, some viewed the women's movement's emphasis on women's independence as having gone too far, in that it could result in divorce and family break-up. On the other hand, the movement's emphasis on men taking on household work and caring roles was highlighted as positive by some interviewees. Muslim interviewees talked about how gender relations are changing within Muslim married couples, as women are increasingly taking on paid employment. This development was seen as positive despite being viewed as contrary to Qur'anic prescriptions about gender roles which emphasise women's caring role in the family and men's role as family 'breadwinners'. Moreover, the Muslim women in our study, like the Christian interviewees, underline the important role of the women's movement in advancing women's right to vote. But in contrast to the Christian interviewees, they put more emphasis on the basic rights accorded to women within Islam. Some point to the fact that women were given rights in Islam much before the onset of the nineteenth-century women's movement.

Yet feminism as a concept was generally not embraced by our interviewees, and many preferred to distance themselves from it although its relevance was not entirely dismissed. This finding seems to imply that the agenda currently pursued by feminists and the women's movement is not striking a cord with many religious women. However, despite distancing themselves from the *label* of feminism, our interviewees expressed support for a number of issues on the women's movement agenda, including equal pay, equal opportunities, and women's empowerment. Despite their dislike of the concept of 'feminism', they had a clear interest in some of the core political claims forwarded by the women's movement. The women's movement thus has a task in communicating its policy agenda to religious women in order to create more dialogue and mutual understanding.

There are several important lessons to be drawn from our preliminary findings; among them the fact that many religious women support major items on the women's movement agenda, such as equal rights and opportunities for women and men. However, many religious women do not identify with the concept of 'feminism', and many view the women's movement as too radical. Feminist women's movement organisations, therefore, seem to have a challenging task ahead in communicating their agenda to religious women who do not feel that their concerns regarding women's rights and equality are served well by feminist organisations. Our findings suggest that there is currently an untapped potential to create alliances between religious and secular women in the advocacy of equal rights and opportunities. This is in line with Nussbaum (1999) who argues 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.: 107).

7.5 Good practice and policy implications

For faith groups and women's movement organisations, our good practice recommendations are:

- For faith groups and organisations to develop equal opportunities for women to take on roles that are currently preserved for men.

- For women's movement organisations 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 government institutions at various levels, we have identified the following policy implications from our research:

- 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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