Youth navigating the superdiverse city of Antwerp: constructing and negotiating ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries.

Ariadne Driezen

Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Sociology

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Ariadne Driezen

Supervisors:
Prof. Dr. Gert Verschraegen
Prof. Dr. Noel Clycq

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Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Prof. Dr. Gert Verschraegen, University of Antwerp, Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Noël Clycq, University of Antwerp, Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Stijn Oosterlynck, University of Antwerp, Chair

Prof. Dr. Orhan Ağirdağ, KU Leuven

Additional Examination Committee:

Prof. Dr. Iman Lechkar, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Prof. Dr. Thijl Sunier, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

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Dora Lein

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‘Waarom wil jij onderzoek doen?’ ‘Ja… ik vind dat gewoon cool’

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SUMMARY

Young people in Antwerp are brought up in a superdiverse majority-minority city. While some research suggests that individuals navigate and live together in these social environments without many difficulties, long-dominant privileged groups nevertheless continue to define social, political and cultural norms, and (up)hold powerful positions. Young people are therefore faced with longstanding social inequalities and stigmatization along ethnic and religious lines, which impact their everyday lives, social relations and social opportunities (for instance, educational opportunities). Antwerp, the urban context where the current research is executed, is characterized by strong anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments and policies, and by emerging 'nativist' discourses in which (sub)national identities, such as a Flemish identity, are constructed in mono-cultural, mono-ethnic and mono-religious ways. This study, therefore, aims to discuss how symbolic boundaries are constructed along ethnic and religious lines, and, in addition, how specifically 'Muslim' as a social category is constructed to define 'oneself' and 'Others'.

This study draws upon symbolic boundary theory to understand how ethno-religious minority and majority youth, as active agents, experience and navigate their superdiverse social environments, and how they construct, negotiate and rework the ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries they are faced with. In addition, this dissertation highlights which cultural repertoires young people can draw on to negotiate these boundaries, and to present their dignified selves.

In my introductory chapter, I will discuss the context of Antwerp, present my theoretical framework and research questions. In Chapter 2, I will discuss more extensively symbolic boundary theory, while in Chapter 3, I will discuss some insights from the field of sociology of religion. Thereafter, in Chapter 4, I will discuss my mixed-method approach. First, I conducted a survey with 1.039 students in the 5th and 6th year of secondary education, from seventeen schools in Antwerp. Second, I selected two schools where I conducted in-depth interviews with forty students.

In my quantitative analysis, I will examine the extent to which young people identify with supranational identities, specifically a European and a cosmopolitan identity, and if these identities function as potential collective social identities for young people in superdiverse settings. In my qualitative analysis, I will gain deeper insights in how Muslim youth rework stigmatization by using cultural repertoires of religious individualism. I will also look into how

young people give meaning to their superdiverse setting, how ethno-religious minority youth use repertoires of ethnic authenticity to rework their othered social position and what it means to be 'cool', and, lastly, how ethno-religious majority youth make sense of their changed social position in superdiverse settings.

Overall, my study shows that ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries emerge as bright for these young people, in which clear social categories and moral hierarchies are constructed between ethno-religious minority and majority youth. My study shows how young people can actively, creatively and strategically rework and negotiate the boundaries they are faced with. Power differentials and moral hierarchies can be challenged, and young people can express individual agency in these unequal social structures. In addition, I also analysed how the identities of majority youth become contested in these settings. My study contributes to the emerging call in superdiversity literature, and in whiteness studies, to understand how dominant majority groups deal with their changing social position. My analysis shows that white majority youth lack tools to negotiate their contested white identities, and are therefore prone to nativist repertoires. Lastly, there has been less focus on religious boundaries in literature on symbolic boundary work and superdiversity in Western European settings. This study challenges classical views of individualization trends in Western Europe, and my analysis shows a continuing importance of religion as marker for social identities among ethno-religious minority and majority youth. This urges questions on the changing role and position of religion in superdiverse cities.

I will end my conclusion with recommendations for schools, concerning diversity and inclusion policies, and for teachers, regarding their interactions with students.

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'Despite the fact that many European cities are so-called majority-minority cities, cities where there is no ethnic-cultural group that belongs to the majority and these places thus belong to all these different groups, it is still assumed that a dominant, privileged group may determine the norm.'[1]

Rachida Lamrabet – Wanneer de Anderen zich op onze vrijheden beroepen (2020), Kif Kif.

The superdiverse majority-minority city of Antwerp

As a result of continuing migration processes, such as older labour migration, family reunification, new migration flows and the refugee crisis, urban areas around the world are diversifying to such an extent that these cities have become superdiverse (Vertovec, 2023). 'Super' refers to the diversification of the existing diversity (for instance, variety in migration statuses), and acknowledges 'a diverse set of diversities' in urban areas in Europe (Crul, 2016; Meissner & Vertovec, 2015; Nowicka & Vertovec, 2014; Wessendorf, 2014, 2016). As pointed out by lawyer, artivist and writer Rachida Lamrabet, European cities are now also described as majority-minority cities. This refers to settings in which there is no longer a *numerical* ethnic or racial majority group (Crul, 2016; Crul & Leslie, 2023; Jiménez, 2017), in which the dominant majority has become a *numerical* minority. The superdiverse city of Antwerp in Belgium is no exception to these societal trends. It can be considered as a majority-minority superdiverse city with a high degree of cultural, social and religious diversity (Albeda, 2020; Albeda, Tersteeg, Oosterlynck & Verschraegen, 2018; Oosterlynck, Saeys, Albeda, Van Puymbroeck & Verschraegen, 2017). In recent years, for instance, the population in Antwerp with a migration background (54.7%) has come to outnumber those without such a background (45.3%) (*Stad in cijfers*, 2023). Moreover, 76.4% of children and youth in Antwerp have a migration background (Opgroeien, 2022) and most schools in Antwerp are superdiverse settings (Ağirdağ, 2020).

Some scholars suggest that these superdiverse settings can encourage conviviality and an acceptance of diversity. Individuals, they say, navigate and live together in these social

[1] *'Ondanks het feit dat heel wat Europese steden zogenaamde majority-minority steden zijn, steden waar geen enkele etnisch-culturele groep tot de meerderheid behoort en deze plekken toebehoren aan al die verschillende groepen, gaat men er nog steeds vanuit dat een dominante, geprivilegieerde groep de norm mag bepalen.'*

environments without many difficulties; cultural differences are not viewed as a problem and are seen as 'commonplace' or 'ordinary' (Nowicka & Vertovec, 2014; Wessendorf, 2014, 2016). This is also reflected in empirical research on how children and youth experience these settings, in which superdiversity is discussed as a normal part of everyday social life (Kostet, Verschraegen & Clycq, 2021; Tran, 2019; Wessendorf, 2016). Nonetheless, as Lamrabet – among many activists and scholars – points out, in superdiverse settings, long-dominant privileged groups continue to define the social, political and cultural norms and (up)hold powerful social positions, even when they are a *numerical* 'minority' (Alba & Duyvendak, 2017; Foner, Duyvendak & Kasinitz, 2019; Torrekens, 2015). Therefore, I will continue to refer to the latter as 'majority' groups, to emphasize their powerful social position. Ethno-racial and religious minorities are then defined as 'minorities', even when they are not a *numerical* minority, due to their social, political and cultural position in hierarchical structures of power. I understand 'minority' as a social construction tied to an unequal distribution of political power, economic and/or cultural resources, and less as a merely quantitative category. The ways in which hierarchical structures operate and who is defined as 'minority' depends on the political and historical context, and can change or vary in times and spaces (Amir-Moazami, 2020). As Amir-Moazami (2020) states: '*minority thus needs to be understood as a political term that denotes hierarchized difference instead of as an objective or neutral, or merely quantitative, category*'.

Numerous empirical studies across Europe show that, within majority-minority cities, social exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination of minoritized communities along ethno-racial and religious lines is very common (for instance, Barwick & Beaman, 2019; Beaman, 2017; Crul, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Foner et al, 2019; Trittler, 2019). Thus, in superdiverse cities, it is imperative to address longstanding social inequalities based on race, ethnicity, class, religion, among other factors, that are maintained and persist as powerful, with an impact on people's everyday life and social relations (Foner et al, 2019). Moreover, there is a general trend in Europe towards an increasing support for extreme right-wing parties and nationalist political and social movements, also among young people (Aydin, Fuess, Sunier & Vázquez, 2021; De Waele & Pauwels, 2016; Doosje, Van den Bos, Loseman, Feddes & Mann, 2012; Ribberink, Achterberg & Houtman 2017a; Miller-Idriss, 2018; Vollebergh, 2016). Superdiversity and topics such as migration are often discussed as problems, thus contributing to the social and civic exclusion of many minorities in Europe.

This is definitely the case for the city of Antwerp (and for Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium). In Antwerp, anti-immigrant stances and anti-Islam sentiments are strong. Right-wing and anti-immigrant political parties did well in local elections in the '90s and 2000s (Albeda, 2020; Torrekens, 2015; Van Puymbroeck, 2014) and continue to be successful. In 2013 the nationalist conservative right-wing party N-VA came to power in Antwerp, promoting strict anti-immigration policies (Albeda, 2020; see e.g. De Wever, 2018). Since 1990, the rise of right-wing political parties and movements has encouraged the political debates to talk about 'the problems' related to migration and diversity (Albeda, 2020; Vollebergh, 2016), and specifically linking 'integration' problems to cultural explanations (Dequeecker, Azabar & Akhanday, 2022, p.27). Superdiverse neighbourhoods such as Borgerhout in Antwerp or Molenbeek in Brussels are still highlighted as problem areas in public and political debates, and are represented in the media in relation to issues such as violence and crime, further stigmatizing these neighbourhoods (Saeys et al, 2014; Wiard & Pereira, 2018). This rhetoric has a strong influence on diversity policies in Antwerp. Not only is there strong support for right-wing political parties; left-wing parties too have moved towards more neoliberal policies since the '80s-'90s, and also advocate exclusionary practices. For instance, in 2007, the left-wing mayor at the time (Patrick Janssens, sp.a) established a headscarf ban for those working in the public administration (Dequeecker, Azabar & Akhanday, 2022, p.23). This ban remains institutionalized and normalized in Antwerp, and consequently throughout Flanders.

Symbolic othering of ethnic and religious minorities

Many of the debates on diversity in Antwerp and Flanders concern what it means to be 'Flemish', and who can claim this identity or belong to this (sub)national community. For instance, there is a strong focus on the Dutch language and adherence to the historical and cultural norms and values of Antwerp or Flanders (Clycq, 2016; Dekker, 2017). In education, assimilationist practices such as a monolingual perspective are still prominent. Students with a migration background are in many cases not allowed to speak their home language in the classroom or the playground, even though research has already proven that a multilingual perspective is beneficial for students' positive school careers (Ağirdağ, 2020; Bergwerff, 2023; Dursun, Ağirdağ & Claes, 2023). Based on these cultural elements, such as language, social categorizations are made in Flanders to delineate between (white) Belgians without a migration background and Belgians with a migration background. The first being referred to as 'autochtonen' ('natives') and the latter as 'allochtonen' ('non-natives') (Van Der Haar & Yanow, 2011).

Other cultural elements, such as religion, also play a role in defining who belongs to the (sub)national community, and debates on this point are particularly heated when it comes to Islam and Muslim identities (Brubaker, 2013; Modood, 2019). Generally in Europe, anti-immigrant stances are widespread, specifically intertwined and related to anti-Muslim sentiments (Foner & Alba, 2008; Ribberink et al, 2017a; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016). Also in Belgium, Muslims are frequently framed as *the* ethno-racial, cultural and religious 'Other'; 'Muslim' as a social category is discussed as inherently incompatible with and opposed to so-called 'Western', 'liberal' and 'secular' values such as gender equality, freedom of speech, neutrality, individual freedom, separation of Church and state, etc. (Aydin et al, 2021; Aziz, 2017; Brubaker, 2017; Cesari, 2004; Fadil, El Asri & Bracke, 2014; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Foner & Alba, 2008; Modood, 2019; Ribberink et al, 2017a; Sunier, 2014; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016; Trittler, 2019; Zemni, 2011). In these comparisons, 'the West', 'European' or 'Flemish' is often claimed as morally superior to 'Islam'; this mostly shows how western European identities aim to define and construct these moral superior identities for themselves by constructing meanings on 'Islam' (Said, 1978; Ribberink et al, 2017a). Therefore, 'Muslim' has become a social category, which is used to define oneself and to define others (Brubaker, 2013). These symbolic constructions also particularly intersect with imaginations on gender, in which Islam is often described as an oppressive religion for women, depicting Muslim women in contrast to 'free' 'emancipated' European and white women. The image of 'free women' is then often used in symbolic conflicts to legitimize the othering of ethno-religious communities (Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Sauer, 2009). In addition, as part of right-wing political tactics in Western Europe, feminism and gay rights are now often used to serve racist, Islamophobic and exclusionary ends (Dequeecker, Azabar & Akhanday, 2022, p.29; Yilmaz, 2016).

'Full' vs. second-class citizens through cultural citizenship

As these various cultural, linguistic, religious etc. elements such as norms, values, symbols and traditions are used to give meaning to (sub)national identities, the question arises as to who can claim these identities? Who can fully belong to the (sub)national community? In debates on 'integration', there is mostly a focus on assimilation and sociocultural aspects: minority communities are often expected to leave parts of their cultural, ethnic and/or religious identities behind and adapt to the 'mainstream' culture to adhere to constructions of a 'Flemish identity' (Dekker, 2017; De Jong & Duyvendak, 2023). In addition, a colour-blind approach towards diversity is also prominent in educational settings, workplaces and other organizations, which

ignores group categories and does not acknowledge and value ethnocultural differences (Ağirdağ, 2020; De Leersnyder, Gündemir & Ağirdağ, 2021; Konings, Ağirdağ & De Leersnyder, 2023). While it is intended to improve social cohesion and social relations, it, rather, fails to acknowledge important markers for social identities and unequal distributions of power that has real social consequences for ethno-racial and religious minorities, and it even contributes to these unequal social consequences (for instance, by banning religious symbols as a 'neutral' policy, which mostly targets the headscarf and the kippah) (Konings, Ağirdağ & De Leersnyder, 2023). Thus, if ethno-religious minority communities desire 'full' membership of the (sub)national community, they are expected not to prioritize their ethnic or religious identities and belongings (De Jong & Duyvendak, 2023; Modood, 2019), instead of their multiple identities and intersecting social belongings being recognized and embraced.

This relates to scholarly debates on cultural citizenship and what it means to be a 'full' citizen (Duyvendak, Geschiere & Tonkens, 2016). Next to the political and judicial meaning of citizenship, which is understood as having legal rights, 'full' citizenship also seems to be about being recognized symbolically and emotionally as co-citizens (Beaman, 2017). Citizenship is culturalized, since it has culturally normative and non-legal dimensions, in which a person is considered a citizen not based on their legislative status (even when born here), but rather on their cultural position (Beaman, 2017; Torrekens, 2015). This creates 'full' and 'second-class' citizens: race, class, religion or immigrant status are barriers to full social acceptance, so ethno-religious communities are denied symbolic access to the national belonging (Beaman, 2017; Duyvendak et al, 2016; Reijerse, Van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet & Duriez, 2013) and in which social groups are equated with a static reified culture (Mepschen, 2019).

Therefore, in the current context, (sub)national identities seem to be frequently defined and constructed in static mono-cultural, mono-ethnic and mono-religious – and thus symbolically exclusive – ways, only minimally recognizing minorities' equal place in society (Crul, 2018; Sardeghi, 2019). This reflects (re-)emerging populist, racial and secularist 'nativist' discourses in Western Europe, in which distinctions between 'natives' and 'non-natives' have become more common, as well as discourses on 'protecting our culture' and 'protecting our identity' (Alba & Foner 2015; De Jong & Duyvendak, 2023; Kešić & Duyvendak, 2019). Immigrants and people with a migration background (even when born here) are thus denied full access to these identity constructions (Beaman, 2017). This creates what Brubaker (2015) calls a 'categorical inequality', in which (re)production of inequality is based on social categories such as ethnicity, race and religion.

The culturalization and legitimization of existing socio-economic inequalities

Alongside this categorical inequality and symbolic constructions of ethno-racial and religious minorities as 'Other', there is also a 'distributional inequality' which refers to an unequal division of material resources, such as economic means and educational opportunities (Brubaker, 2015; Safi, 2020). In the '60s and '70s in Belgium, migrants mostly from Morocco and Turkey were recruited as cheap (low educated) labour (Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016). After that, migration continued through, for instance, family reunification. Many of these families, and second or third-generation youngsters, are still in lower socio-economic positions due to factors such as generational poverty and an enduring lack of equal opportunities in the educational system (Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016). Empirical studies in Flanders and Antwerp show continuing discrimination based on racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic markers until this day on the housing market and labour market (Bourabain & Verhaeghe, 2019; Bourabain, Verhaeghe & Stevens, 2020; Mike & Van Laer, 2022; Van Der Bracht, Coenen & Van De Putte, 2015; Uit De Marge & Betonne jeugd, 2022), as well as discrimination in educational settings (Bourabain et al, 2020; Konings, Ağirdağ & De Leersnyder, 2023; Van Praag, Ağirdağ, Stevens & Van Houtte, 2016; Vervaet; D'Hondt, Van Houtte & Stevens, 2016). In education, research shows that ethnic and religious minority students often experience stigmatization and discrimination from teachers in school (Baysu, Hillekens, Phalet & Deaux, 2020; Fleischmann, Phalet & Klein, 2011; Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). Teachers tend to have lower expectations of their students with a migration background (Boone, Thys, Van Avermaet & Van Houtte, 2018; Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne & Sibley, 2016) and these students are more likely to be advised by their teacher to follow a 'lower' educational track. Thus, students with a migration background are proportionally more numerous in vocational educational tracks, and have therefore less of a chance to pursue higher education (Ağirdağ, 2016), or are more likely to drop out of school (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). School and learning possibilities, and achievements such as grades and educational level, are thus not equally distributed among students, resulting in clear educational inequalities along ethnic and racial lines (Ağirdağ, 2020).

Strikingly, in public and political debates, and sometimes in research (e.g. Koopmans, 2015), socio-economic inequalities are further legitimatized and maintained by being attributed to cultural, ethnic or religious elements. They are therefore minimalized, culturalized and individualized (Ağirdağ, 2020; Foner et al, 2019). For instance, the study of Van Praag et al (2016) shows that in Flemish schools, poorer school performances among Muslim youth are

often explained by teachers as a consequence of an incompatibility between Islamic norms and values, and the dominant values in Belgian society. Islamic religiosity among students is seen as hindering their educational success. Moreover, in 2017, the former minister of education, Hilde Crevits (CD&V), attributed trends such as poorer educational performances among students with a migration background to less involvement of their parents. Thus, she redirected a structural issue to individual responsibilities of the parents. She added *"we must dare to emphasize our Flemish identity, and norms and values"* (Crevits, 2017), thus also placing an emphasis on cultural elements.

This shift in explaining societal trends, from structure and socio-economic inequalities to culture, is referred to as a 'cultural turn'. In the book *'How the workers became Muslims'* by Yilmaz (2016), the author discusses how the culturalization of socio-economic inequalities has led to a focus on cultural differences, rather than on workers' shared experience and the structural factors that contribute to their social and economic exclusions. Indeed, this focus on cultural elements and conflicts between norms and values, distracts the attention from socio-economic trends and material and political conflicts over resources and rights (for instance, unwelcome economic cuts, the housing crisis, etc.) (Lamrabet, 2017, p.41; Torrekens, 2015; Yilmaz, 2016). By attributing social inequalities to cultural and individual factors, dominant power hierarchies are reinforced and maintained (Wimmer, 2013).

This culturalization of socio-economic inequalities further reinforces symbolic constructions of ethno-racial and religious minorities, which then again further legitimizes institutional choices that can maintain these social inequalities. The best example of this interplay is that of the headscarf bans, which are common in Belgium. They are legitimized through symbolic constructions of Islam as oppressive for women, claiming that a ban would ensure Western values of 'gender equality'. Thus, in 2007, a ban was established for all public administration jobs in Antwerp, and in 2010, Belgium became the first European country to pass a law forbidding wearing of the full veil in public (Torrekens, 2015). In 2009, a high school in Antwerp introduced a ban, after which many schools followed suit. This happens not only in secondary education, but in higher education as well. For instance, a college in Brussels decided to ban the headscarf. A protest by the movement Hijabis Fight Back was organized on July 6th 2020 with the slogans:

'Elle est oú? La liberté? Si on ne peut pas mettre ce qu'on veut!' #NeTouchePasÁMesÉtudes #HijabisFightBack.

'Where is she? Freedom? If we can't wear what we want!' #donotttouchmyeducation #hijabisfightback

This protest addressed the maintenance and persistence of structural and symbolic exclusion of Muslims – and specifically Muslim women – as they do not have equal access to education and thus career opportunities. The movement won their case in 2021 (after four years of legal battles), as the ban was found to be in violation of the constitution (Dequeecker, Azabar & Akhanday, 2022, p.107). Although the organization BOEH![2] (together with students, parents and other civil society organizations) won various legal cases against the GO!-educational network for establishing a ban (it was clearly ruled to be a discriminatory practice against Muslims, contrary to the right to religious freedom), the GO!-educational network did not retract its policy and the ban remains in place in most public schools (for an overview Azabar, 2022, p.113). Thus, through these bans, citizenship is culturalized and the responsibility for 'integration' is individualized, while existing socio-economic inequalities are maintained (Amir-Moazami, 2022; Sauer, 2009; Torrekens, 2015).

How do young people navigate their social identities in this superdiverse setting?

Young people in Antwerp are socialized and brought up in these emerging superdiverse majority-minority settings. Less is empirically known about 'how superdiversity unfolds and operates in concrete everyday relations and interactions in a variety of settings' (Foner et al, 2019, p.2). More research, moreover, is needed on how young people, as active agents, experience and navigate this social environment (Maene, Van Rossem and Stevens, 2021; Tran, 2010).

As discussed in the previous section, social exclusion processes and inequalities are pertinent in this superdiverse setting, and I am interested in how differences between social groups are symbolically constructed along ethnic and religious lines, which can reinforce or legitimize these processes of social exclusion. I am interested in how ethno-religious minority students and majority students navigate their superdiverse city context, give meaning to and deal with social categorizations they are confronted with and how they negotiate their multiple,

[2] Baas Over Eigen Hoofd.

intersecting and changing belongings to various social groups in different social contexts (Lamont et al, 2016).

Symbolic boundary theory

To understand how such social categories are symbolically constructed, I draw upon insights from the field of cultural sociology, and specifically symbolic boundary theory (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass & Lamont, 2007), which I will discuss more extensively in **Chapter 2**. Symbolic boundary theory engages with questions such as: How are symbolic boundaries constructed that can create differences and similarities between groups? Which values and moral worth are attributed to social groups, whereby moral hierarchies are constructed? And, as these moral hierarchies can potentially create discredited social identities, how can social actors (such as individuals, groups, social movements) rework symbolic boundaries and construct dignified social identities for themselves and in relation to others?

In short, symbolic boundaries are "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people and practices. […] They separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership" (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p.168). Through symbolic boundaries, groups can become categorized into 'us' vs. 'them', and these boundaries are socially constructed through symbolic markers such as language, religion, culture, in which a moral hierarchy can be implied among individuals and groups (Small, Harding & Lamont, 2010). These symbolic boundaries can be *blurry* and fuzzy in one context, in which social actors belong to overlapping and several social categories, and where these demarcations have few social consequences (Wimmer, 2013). However, in another context, they may also be static, impermeable and *bright*, with clearly defined identities, and with, for instance, a strong boundary between minority and majority ethnic groups, resulting in discrimination against minorities (Alba, 2005; Albeda et al, 2018; Wimmer, 2013). Another example could be that for young people, a 'cool' social identity can vary between different contexts, clearly demarcating whether or not one is part of a friendship group. In one context, it will matter and define a moral hierarchy between peer groups, in another context it will not play a significant role. In addition, in one context they will be able to claim that valorized social identity, and in another context they will not be able to. Thus, the importance but also the availability of a social identity can vary between contexts.

Symbolic boundary theory allows researchers to approach individuals and groups as social actors who engage and interact with social categorizations, and thus participate in *boundary*

work. Researchers can analyse how social actors draw, rework, redefine, negotiate, blur, maintain, etc. boundaries and, for instance, delineate various *boundary strategies* (e.g. Lamont et al, 2016; Wimmer, 2013). Within boundary theory, social actors actively, creatively and strategically engage in boundary work and thus orient themselves in their social environment. To understand boundary work, I also turn to the concept of *cultural repertoires*, to better understand which cultural resources youth can draw on to negotiate symbolic boundaries and present their dignified selves (Lamont & Small, 2008; Swidler, 1986). This allows us to understand how boundary strategies are constructed by drawing on historically constituted, culturally available narrative templates (Lamont et al, 2016), such as neoliberal repertoires (e.g. meritocracy, self-reliance), anti-racist repertoires (e.g. social justice), secularist repertoires (e.g. privatized religiosity), etc.

While in my dissertation I will mostly focus on how, in interactions between individuals and social groups, these symbolic boundaries are constructed and negotiated, it is important to understand that these symbolic boundaries can lead to or further reinforce already existing social boundaries (e.g. educational or income inequalities between groups, segregation in neighbourhoods). Symbolic boundaries can become normalized, and therefore legitimize the institutionalization of social inequality and maintenance of existing power hierarchies (Lamont, Pendergrass & Pachuki, 2015; Lamont et al, 2016; Wimmer, 2013). As we saw in the first section of the introduction, the institutionalization of a headscarf ban in Flanders is legitimized through the symbolic constructions of Muslims as 'the Other', thus reinforcing an already socially excluded position for Muslim communities.

As my research is taking place within a superdiverse majority-minority city, by applying symbolic boundary theory in this setting, I also contribute to the literature on superdiversity. The notion of superdiversity has been embraced by scholars, and allows us to understand the diversification within diversity. This enables us to challenge and rethink dominant multicultural, assimilationist and acculturation approaches in which concepts such as 'identity' and 'groups' were mostly understood as 'fixed entities' and in which ethnic-cultural communities were addressed as internally homogenous (Alba & Duyvendak, 2017; Albeda, 2020; Crul, 2016; Maene et al, 2021; Laoukili, Oosterlynck, Swerts, Wouters & Cools, 2019; Vertovec, 2010). The literature on superdiversity calls for more in-depth research on the dynamic interplay and intersection between ethnocultural diversity and other various axes of social differentiation such as educational level, socio-economic position, migration and civic

statuses, gender, religion, residential status, etc. (Crul, 2016; Foner et al, 2019; Geldof, 2015; Vertovec, 2010).

However, in research on superdiversity the focus is mostly directed to how citizens live together in their city or neighbourhood. This focus on *conviviality* often overlooks power differentials and hierarchies at a level beyond the neighbourhood, and this perspective has therefore been less able to capture the social, economic and political power of the dominant majority (Foner et al, 2019). Boundary theory allows us to understand better how social actors give meaning to their social identities and actively rework symbolic boundaries, while at the same time it situates these actors within social contexts that are characterized and stratified by differences in power, resources and opportunities (Wimmer, 2013).

Ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries

In this dissertation, I am concerned with how young people construct and negotiate ethnic and religious categories. Research has shown that there are bright ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries in Western European cities and schools, but also particularly in Antwerp; this has an important impact on how social actors give meaning to themselves and to others, and can thus have social outcomes such as unequal educational opportunities and how young people's friendship relations are structured (Albeda, 2020; Kostet, 2022; Phalet, Maliepaard, Fleischmann & Güngör, 2013; Simsek, Tubergen & Fleischmann, 2022; Trittler, 2019). First, in this research, I look into how ethnic markers are used to distinguish social groups. While I focus on 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic' boundaries, I not only refer to how it is marked by, for instance, shared history, language, customs, norms, etc. (Jugert, Kaiser, Laluna & Civitillo, 2021; Weber, 1978), but also to biological and phenotypic (e.g. skin colour) criteria that are typically linked to the concept of 'race' (Jugert et al, 2021). Indeed, biological markers can also inform ethnic belonging (Beaman, 2021; Kostet, 2022), and ethnic categories can be racialized in a Western European setting as well (Beaman, 2017). I, therefore, do not see 'ethnicity' and 'race' as contrasting concepts, but as closely interrelated (Jugert et al, 2021). Both are treated in my research as social constructions and changeable, and not essential 'fixed' or stable 'entities', in which ethnic or racial communities are seen as 'given' (I will discuss this more extensively in Chapter 2) (Brubaker, 2004; Cornell & Hartmann, 2006; Jugert et al, 2021).

Second, I look into specifically religion as a marker for group boundaries in superdiverse settings. Religious symbolic boundaries have received less attention in the literature on

superdiversity and boundary theory in a European context (there has been some empirical research on religious diversity and identities in educational settings e.g. Hemmerechts, Kavadias & Ağirdağ, 2018; Van Praag et al, 2016; Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). Therefore, I aim to contribute to the literature by directing attention to constructions of secular vs. religious identities, and specifically how 'Muslims' as a social category is constructed (Becker, Guhin & Rinado, 2023).

Western European societies are characterized by a dominant and normative secular self-understanding, with a suspicion of claims based on religion and religious practices, definitely in the public sphere (Casanova, 2007; Foner & Alba, 2008; Trittler, 2019). So although superdiverse European societies may tolerate individual religious freedom and choices (Casanova, 2007), religion is often expected to be practised in private (Juchtmans & Nicaise, 2014); the pressure towards privatization of religion makes it difficult for these societies to recognize a legitimate role for religion in public life and the mobilization and organization of collective (religious) group identities (Casanova, 2007). While Western European countries traditionally support one or more versions of Christianity, Modood (2019) argues that a more radical secularism has become influential, especially since 9/11, and most visibly in countries such as France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium. This secularist discourse pits religious identities and group membership against secular-political authority and equal citizenship. However, at the same time, scholars argue that Christian identities still remain, and even revive, as important markers for the (sub)national belonging and for European's heritage and culture (Joppke, 2018; Laniel, 2016; Storm, 2011; Trittler, 2019). This revival is mostly observed in national-populist right wing discourses, specifically as an argument to legitimize the symbolic othering and social exclusion of Muslim immigrants and communities (Brubaker, 2017; Casanova, 2007; Joppke, 2018; Storm, 2011; Trittler, 2019).

Moreover, research shows that secular-religious symbolic boundaries among young people in West European settings are particularly pronounced between Muslim and non-Muslim youth, rather than between non-religious and religious young people (Simsek, Tubergen & Fleischmann, 2022). In public and political debates, negative social connotation of religion are mostly pronounced to Islam (and intertwined with anti-immigrant sentiments), rather than of religion in general (Cesari, 2004; Foner & Alba, 2008; Kivisto, 2014; Sunier, 2014; Trittler, 2019). Muslim identities are thus not only constructed as cultural 'Other' in relation to the 'modern', 'liberal' secular West, but also as the religious 'Other' as a non-Christian religion. In addition, stigmatization and marginalization related to Muslim identities, is not only on the

basis of Islam or their 'religiousness', but also on the basis of 'ethnicity' and 'race'. Scholars argue that Muslims in Europe are therefore racialized, in which physical and cultural traits are viewed as inherent to members of this 'group' (Aydin, Fuess, Sunier & Vázquez, 2021; Modood, 2019), and Islamophobia can be understood as a specific form of racism that targets Muslims (Beaman, 2021; Garner & Selod, 2014). Therefore, young Muslims have to give meaning to their social identities in a context of clear ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries, and although their identities are highly stigmatized, research shows that religion remains an important marker for young Muslims' social identities (Beaman, 2015; Brubaker, 2013; Fleishmann & Phalet, 2018; Karlsen & Nazroo, 2015; Maxwell & Bleich, 2014; O'Brien, 2017; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012).

In my research, I use boundary theory as my theoretical and analytical framework (chapter 2). In **Chapter 3**, I will also discuss some insights from the field of sociology of religion on secularization trends in Europe and Belgium, which helps to understand how religion and Islam is accommodated in Belgium, and how dominant secular identities, as well as cultural Christian identities, are constructed. This chapter provides some explanations on the broader social, historical and institutional context wherein young people have to give meaning to their social identities.

Research questions and a mixed-method design

In my research, I will answer the following broader research questions:

How do ethno-religious minority and majority students navigate and give meaning to their multiple social identities within a superdiverse city? How do they construct, negotiate and rework ethnic and religious boundaries, **and on which cultural repertoires do they draw to do so?**

To answer these questions, I will use a mixed-method design, and will elaborate on my research context (the city of Antwerp and Flemish secondary education) and methods in **Chapter 4**. First, I use a quantitative analysis, which offers an effective way to understand broader trends of identity formation among youth (for instance Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Maene et al, 2021; Maene, D'hondt, Van Lissa, Thijs & Stevens, 2022). Secondly, I use a qualitative analysis to gain deeper insights into the meaning-making processes of young people (for instance Lamont et al, 2016). These two approaches are used equally, and are complementary in my research. In symbolic boundary theory, there has been

less focus on a mixed-method design in which identity constructions and boundary work are approached using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

For the quantitative part of my study, I conducted a survey with 1.039 students in the 5th and 6th year of secondary education, from seventeen schools in Antwerp. For the qualitative part, I selected two schools where I conducted in-depth interviews with forty students.

Young people negotiating ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries

I will tackle the broader research questions in my empirical chapters, where I go deeper into how young people navigate these settings and negotiate their social identities, as well as ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries. In **Chapters 5** and **6**, I make use of quantitative methods to understand the extent to which young people identify with supranational identities (European and everyday cosmopolitan identities), that have the potential to function as collective social identities for youth in superdiverse contexts. In **Chapters 7** and **8**, I apply qualitative methods to understand better how young people give meaning to and navigate these superdiverse settings, and how they construct, rework and negotiate ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries, using the cultural repertoires that are available to them.

Collective identity formation: supranational identities

As discussed in this introduction, Flemish identity seems to be mostly defined in mono-cultural way, in which ethno-cultural diversity is seldom considered as part of (sub)national imaginations. Therefore, research shows that (sub)national identities often seem less attractive to individuals with a migration background (since they may be experienced as rather exclusive), while these remain important for individuals without a migration background (Alba & Foner, 2015; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). Thus, youth with and without a migration background may not share the same feelings of belonging in a superdiverse context when navigating their multiple belongings. This stands in sharp contrast to the Flemish educational system, which still puts forward a culturally and linguistically unified representation of the 'Flemish' nation (Clycq, 2016).

This raises questions on how youth in a superdiverse context can have a shared sense of belonging, and whether other collective identities can emerge with which young people with and without a migration background can identify (thus blurring symbolic boundaries between them). To answer these questions, research is more and more looking into the importance of supranational identities as a potential for collective identity formation. More specifically,

empirical studies show that individuals with a non-European migration background might potentially identify more with a European identity than with the (sub)national identities of the country they are living in (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte 2016; Erisen, 2017; Teney, Hanquinet & Bürkin, 2016). Invoking a European identity could be a fruitful strategy for bypassing exclusive (sub)national identities (Erisen, 2017), and for claiming an equal group status and symbolic access to feeling and being seen as a full citizen (for instance, as a European) (Lamont et al, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016). Thus, could a supranational identity, such as European identity, be a shared collective identity for all youth in a superdiverse context, thus blurring symbolic boundaries between youth with and without a migration background?

As education systems are often also core institutions in nation-building processes and thus in shaping the identity of young people (through school curricula, language usage) (Green, 2013; Reay, 2010), it seems important to also look into factors within educational settings that can impact the extent to which youth identify with (sub)national and supranational identities. Research already shows that, for instance, negative student-teacher relations can negatively impact the identification of students with their school (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). Therefore, in our empirical study, we will also focus on the role of perceived discrimination at school and feeling supported by teachers, on young people's identifications.

In **Chapter 5**, I will thus tackle the following research questions:

1. (A) To what extent do Belgian 'native' and Moroccan origin students identify with a Flemish and a European identity? (B) Do Belgian 'native' and Moroccan origin students differ significantly in their Flemish and European identity?
2. What is the effect of perceived discrimination at school on the one hand, and support from teachers on the other hand, on Flemish and European identity for (A) Moroccan origin students, and (B) Belgian 'native' students.

Everyday cosmopolitan orientations

In the following chapter, we continue to look into the potential of supranational identities as a shared collective identity for youth in superdiverse settings, which can potentially blur bright ethnic and religious boundaries and bypass exclusive national identities. Research suggests that young people in urban areas are highly likely to report cosmopolitan identities and attitudes, but there is a lack of empirical research (Keating, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2009).

Cosmopolitanism in the social sciences is mostly understood as a conscious openness to cultural differences, and feelings of being a world citizen (Hannerz, 2004; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). We build on research on so-called 'ordinary' or 'everyday' cosmopolitanism in which several scholars set out to examine how cosmopolitan 'openness' – as an everyday disposition – is constituted in quotidian contexts (Pichler, 2009; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Wang, 2018). It is a cosmopolitanism 'from below' or a 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', which is less elitist and less Eurocentric (Werbner, 2015). This is in line with Appiah's (2010) argument on 'rooted cosmopolitanism', referring to cosmopolitans as members of morally and emotionally significant communities, and thus as 'rooted' in local allegiances, while embracing notions of tolerance and openness to the world and an identity based on a shared humanity.

Interestingly, while we plan to examine how a cosmopolitan identity can bridge or blur ethno-religious boundaries, everyday cosmopolitanism it is often presupposed, in literature and public debates, that cosmopolitanism is intertwined with liberalism and secularism (cf. Appiah, 2017). Religion is usually not taken into consideration as a component of cosmopolitan imaginations or even examined as a positive contributor to the emergence of global citizenship and common humanity (Iqtidar, 2012; Levitt, 2008). As I also already discussed at the beginning of this introductory chapter, religion in general is treated as opposite to secular and liberal 'Western European' values, but this approach is also specifically related to the construction of Islamic identities as inherently incompatible with these values.

In our study, however, we will argue that religious identities, beliefs and practices can equally well be used as a strategy for bridging group boundaries, and can contribute to constructing a world citizen identity. We will follow insights from qualitative research that demonstrate how religious individuals can employ universalistic religious repertoires that foreground a commitment to a common humanity and emphasize a collective world citizen or human identity that transcends all boundaries (nationality, ethnicity, religious, etc.) (e.g. Beaman, 2016; Jacobson, 1997; Lamont, Morning & Mooney, 2002; Synnes, 2018). This is definitely of interest for young people from ethno-religious minority communities, as they have to negotiate their multiple belongings and identities in a context where they are expected to adhere to an exclusive (sub)national identity. A cosmopolitan identity could be a way around the latter issue and could function as a collective identity for all young people.

Thus, we will explore to what extent young people identify with world citizen and cosmopolitan orientations, and thus whether these can function potentially as a shared collective identity. In addition, we examine how this differs for religious (Muslim and Christian) and non-religious students, and thus if religiosity can foster cosmopolitan orientations.

In **Chapter 6**, we will tackle the following research questions:

1. Do Muslim, Christian and non-religious urban youth differ in their everyday cosmopolitan orientations?
2. What are the effects of religiosity (religious practices and intrinsic religiosity), religious identification and perceived discrimination against ethnic/religious groups in school on everyday cosmopolitan orientations, for Muslim and Christian youth?

Cultural repertoires of religious individualism

In this chapter, we wish to gain a better understanding of how religious symbolic boundaries are constructed in a superdiverse context, how they can potentially emerge as bright, and how this is particularly related to Islam. As we aim to understand how youth in general navigate their multiple identities and belongings in superdiverse contexts, we focus in this chapter on Muslim youth and how they are urged to engage in boundary work to negotiate their highly debated religious identity.

We aim to investigate how young Muslims experience and have to negotiate tensions between their religious identification and the broader and powerful cultural framework of individualism (O'Brien, 2015, 2017). Modern individualism refers to an 'individual-as-actor' worldview and requires individuals to present themselves as autonomous, capable of taking their own decisions (Cortois & Laermans, 2018; O'Brien, 2015). Developing a religious identity in this individualist culture is challenging, as the latter expects young people to live a life emphasizing personal choice over commitment to tradition and their religious communities (O'Brien, 2017). A central belief within this cultural frame of individualism is the rejection of religiously informed morality (Casanova, 2011; Dobbelaere, 1999), and self-expression and agency are seen as a movement against religious norms and tradition (Cortois & Laermans, 2018; Modood, 2019; O'Brien, 2015). Given this dominant frame, religious individuals are often expected to comply with this secular perspective on individualism, and not to prioritize their religious identification if they wish to be seen as agentive individuals and to claim equal membership of the national imagination (Modood, 2019; O'Brien, 2015). However, for Muslim youth, their

religious identification and belonging to their religious communities are also important markers for their identity, and even though they may actively *choose* to participate in religious practices and traditions, their agency is often questioned by non-Muslim audiences. Thus, they are faced with the challenge of how to maintain participation in religious collective practices and traditions, and their belonging to their Muslim families, peers, etc., while reworking constructed incompatibilities between their religious identification and individualist values.

We will explore how young Muslims present themselves to various audiences (Goffman, 2002) by creatively drawing on cultural repertoires of religious individualism to rework these tensions. Cultural repertoires of 'religious individualism' (O'Brien, 2015) are a broad set of cultural elements expressing individual autonomy and agency within a religious framework. The notion adds an important nuance to the classic debate on secularization in Western societies. Instead of contrasting religion and individuality, the repertoire of 'religious individualism' offers resources for religious individuals to emphasize their autonomy in being religious and identifying with collective values, and to express their personal choice within a religious frame (Fadil, 2005; Fadil & Fernando, 2015; Mahmood, 2011; O'Brien, 2015). We will also explore the role of gender in negotiating these contestations, as research indicates that Muslim women have to engage in even more taxing boundary work, reworking the perception that they are oppressed when choosing, for instance, to wear the veil (Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Yeste, Zeguari, Álvarez & Folch, 2020).

In **Chapter 7**, we tackle the following questions:

1. (A) How are young Muslims' agency and autonomy contested and questioned by non-Muslim audiences and (B) how do they present a dignified self to Muslim audiences?
2. How do young Muslims enact repertoires of religious individualism to rework the constructed contestation between their religious identity and a dominant (secular) repertoire on individualism?

In search of cool identities

In my last chapter, we study how young people give meaning to their superdiverse context and diverse peer relations. On the one hand, we will discuss a cultural repertoire on 'commonplace diversity', where diversity is experienced as a normal part of social life (Kostet, Verschraegen & Clycq, 2021; Wessendorf, 2014). On the other hand, we study how young people construct 'cool identities' that delineate the 'us' from the 'them' based on ethnic and religious elements. 'Coolness' is an important marker for identity among young people, helping them to navigate

their social relations (Bucholtz, 2010), and we will discuss how ethnic and religious boundaries also emerge as bright when it comes to claiming the status of 'cool'. As in my previous empirical chapter, we will analyse the different cultural repertoires that young people draw upon to maintain, rework and negotiate these symbolic boundaries with which they are confronted. This chapter contributes not only to literature on how ethnic and religious minority youth negotiate their minority status (e.g. Fleming, lamont & Welburn, 2012; Herding, 2013; Lamont et al, 2016; Phalet et al, 2013), but also to the more recent literature on ethnic majority youth navigating their social status in a majority-minority setting (e.g. Crul, 2018; Kraus & Crul, 2022).

We look into how minoritized youth are confronted with othering and social exclusion, and how they challenge dominant repertoires on race, ethnicity and religion by inverting their othered identities and questioning existing power relations (Goffman, 1963; Lamont et al, 2016; Modood, 2019; Wimmer, 2013); they re-evaluate what it means to be cool, using repertoires on ethnic authenticity and hybridity. This is, for instance, in line with previous research on how Muslim youth in the US construct a cool identity based on ethnic authenticity, in order to oppose a racial hierarchy and re-evaluate their group's status (Khabeer, 2016). In addition, we look into how majority youth face new challenges, as their previously taken-for-granted dominant position becomes more and more questioned in superdiverse settings. This raises important questions on how white majority youth make sense of their changed social position (Crul, 2016; Jiménez, 2017; Maene et al, 2021), an often forgotten group in research on superdiversity (Crul & Leslie, 2023). We will discuss the repertoires used, such as ethnic purity, and dominant perspectives on what it means to be a 'normal' and 'cool' youngster (for instance, by drinking alcohol).

In **Chapter 8**, we tackle the following questions:

1. How do young people give meaning to a superdiverse majority-minority context and their diverse peer relations?
2. How do minority and majority students construct a cool identity, and on which cultural repertoires do they draw to rework, maintain or negotiate ethnic and religious boundaries?

Summary and overview

In my dissertation, I aim to answer the following broader research questions: How do young people navigate and give meaning to their multiple social identities in a superdiverse city? How

do they construct, negotiate and rework ethnic and religious boundaries, and on which cultural repertoires do they draw to do so?

In **Chapter 2**, I will elaborate on symbolic boundary theory, which I use as an analytical framework to analyse and understand identification processes, how social actors give meaning to group boundaries and how social categories are actively constructed and negotiated. Thereafter, in **Chapter 3**, I will draw on insights from sociology of religion to understand secularization trends in Belgium, and how these impact the accommodation of Islam. In addition, I will elaborate on how normative secular and cultural Christian identities are constructed in Europe, particularly in relation to Muslim identities. While my dissertation as a whole mainly focuses on symbolic boundary work on an individual and interaction level, this chapter provides us with further insights into the broader institutional, historical and social context in which young people need to navigate their identities and group belongings. In **Chapter 4**, I will discuss the mixed-method approach I used in my research. In my empirical chapters, I will firstly take a quantitative approach, and thereafter a qualitive approach. In **Chapter 9**, I will report the conclusions of my dissertation, and will elaborate on future research recommendations as well as suggestions for inclusion policies for schools.

Chapter 2

Identification processes and symbolic boundary work

How can we study identification processes among youth and analyse the 'making, unmaking and negotiating of group boundaries' (Wimmer, 2013) in superdiverse contexts? While various approaches are used in sociology, social anthropology and social psychology, I draw upon concepts of symbolic boundary theory (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont, Pendergrass & Pachucki, 2015).

In this chapter, I first discuss some main insights from a broad social constructivist tradition, on which I draw to analyse identification and boundary processes. Thereafter, I will elaborate on the concept of symbolic boundaries and how they can emerge as bright or otherwise in certain social and institutional settings. I will explain the concept of social boundaries and how symbolic boundaries can become institutionalized. Lastly, I will discuss symbolic boundary work and the concept of cultural repertoires, to understand how social actors actively draw upon cultural tools to negotiate or rework symbolic boundaries.

A social constructivist approach

I situate my dissertation, rather broadly, in a social constructivist tradition in ethnic and racial studies and cultural sociology, seeking to understand identification processes and boundary work (Brubaker, 2013, 2014; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Wimmer, 2013). This approach moves away from primordialism, which views identities and social groups as fixed and stable 'entities' rooted in unchangeable and essential circumstances at birth, and sees membership of (ethnic) communities as given and prescribed (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006). Social constructivism, rather, addresses 'identities' as socially constructed through identification and boundary processes, so that groups cannot be predefined by inherent cultural differences or traits. It also allows us to understand the broad variations in strength and fluidity of identities and how these can be relevant and salient (or not) in certain social settings.

Therefore, scholars such as Brubaker & Cooper (2000) and Brubaker (2013) propose moving away from 'identity' as a starting point and analytical concept ('a category of analysis') and suggest using concepts such as identification and categorization instead. Identif*ication*, as a processual and active term, directs our attention to the process itself and invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying, which can be individuals but also institutions such as schools, nations or the state. These identification processes take place in various aspects of social life, from everyday interactions among individuals to media discourse, political propaganda (e.g.

identity politics, anti-immigrant stances), and policy documents from political and civil society organizations. These meaning-making processes can then construct, legitimize and institutionalize internal sameness, distinctiveness and/or bounded groupness. To give an example, powerful institutions such as the modern state can formalize and codify categorizations (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), through, for instance, the passport, which exemplifies how states monopolize and control movement across international boundaries through identification documents (Torpey, 2018).

While 'identification' is used as a 'category of analysis', 'identity' remains an important 'category of practice' (Brubaker, 2013; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). This refers to how identity as a condition is used between individuals in everyday life to make sense of themselves and how they feel simultaneously similar and different from others. 'Identity', as a term, is also intensely used in public and political discourses and debates by individuals, civil society organizations, political parties, etc., to legitimatize, for example, political statements and collective actions. For instance, in Flanders a 'Flemish identity' is frequently used and constructed by right-wing and nationalist political parties, to legitimize their political choices and stances towards migration and integration policies. This constructed identity then functions as a real, important and powerful phenomenon in everyday life, and has real consequences (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). A social constructivist approach therefore does not ignore the reality of identity as an experienced entity and condition, yet understands that the imagination of identities is a result of identification processes and that they are constructed within social interactions, between social groups, by institutions, etc. From this perspective it is important to study how a sense of 'groupness', with a clearly demarcated 'group identity', is an *outcome* of identification processes rather than a *given*, and how it becomes a powerful reality, which can create hierarchies in moral worth that structure individual experiences and have real structural consequences (Becker, Guhin & Rinado, 2023).

Symbolic boundary theory

Weber and Durkheim initially shaped the literature on symbolic boundaries, and authors such as Pierre Bourdieu, Frederik Barth and Michèle Lamont have further extended this literature (see discussion in Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont et al, 2015). Barth (1969) mostly focused on the formation of ethnic groups as a result of boundary work and on boundary maintenance, and thus moved beyond a Herderian approach in which ethnic groups were seen as self-evident units of analysis. Yet, as he mostly focused on ethnic groups in a specific context, his approach

is often seen as rather static and needs to be dynamized. The notion of symbolic boundary subsequently developed into a broader theory beyond ethnicity (Brubaker, 2014), in which various strategies of boundary work (not just boundary maintenance) are identified and applied to various social and institutional contexts (Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Wimmer, 2013).

More recent research on symbolic boundary work has focused on how symbolic and social boundaries are made, reworked, negotiated, etc. and in which contexts boundary markers are strongly used (or not) to construct differences and similarities (Alba, 2005; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont et al, 2016; Wimmer, 2013). The conceptualization of boundary making is particularly influential in the fields of cultural sociology and ethnic and racial studies. In ethnic and racial studies, for instance, Wimmer (2013) studies the variation in ethnic boundaries and how these are related to specific institutional contexts and power hierarchies, discussing why ethnicity matters in certain contexts, while other boundary markers are more salient in others. In cultural sociology, which I mostly draw upon for my research, the conceptualization of boundary making is geared to understanding meaning-making processes in the construction of group boundaries, and to studying how social categories, based on, for example, religion, gender, class or ethnicity and their intersections, are constructed, negotiated and reconstructed (Albeda et al, 2018; Lamont et al, 2015).

Identification processes and symbolic boundaries

How do social actors identify and categorize others, as well as themselves, in relation to social categorization schemes such as ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.? In general, we can be members of various classes of persons that share some categorical attributes (e.g. nationality), and are positioned and socially located in relational webs (e.g. family relations, friendship and peer networks, etc.) (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). These social identities are constructed through a dialectic interplay between internal identifications (how individuals define themselves and what it means to belong to a group) and external identifications (how others perceive and give meaning to them in the social environment) (Jenkins, 2014; Lamont & Mizrachi, 2011). This internal identification process must be recognized by others (in and out-group members) so that a collective social identity can emerge (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). It is therefore embedded in social life: how one identifies oneself, and is identified by others, can vary from group to group and from context to context (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Individuals therefore navigate and negotiate multiple, intersecting and changing belongings to various social groups, and

manage various sets of meanings, social roles and cultural expectations related to these belongings (Lamont et al., 2016).

To study these identification processes in relation to social categorization schemes (ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.), I turn to the concept of symbolic boundaries. Symbolic boundaries can be defined as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people and practices. […] They separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership". (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p.168). These symbolic boundaries represent cognitive categorizations and classification systems that are socially constructed, and define and demarcate social groups from each other, while simultaneously in-group similarity is constructed (feelings of comfort within groups, support, sense of belonging, etc.) and out-group differences are generated (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont & Mizrachi, 2011; Small, Harding & Lamont, 2010).

Symbolic boundaries are constructed through boundary markers to define a group's identity in opposition to that of another group (Barth, 1969; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Wimmer, 2013). Distinctions and similarities can be expressed, for instance, through normative interdictions, cultural attitudes and practices, and patterns of likes and dislikes. These markers play an important role in the constructions of inequality and the execution and maintenance of power, as a significant 'Other' can be constructed and placed on the 'opposite' side of the symbolic boundary (Lamont et al, 2015). Thus, they clarify the cultural basis for group divisions and for who is seen as a legitimate member of a social group, and can hence imply a hierarchy of moral worth across individuals and groups (Small et al, 2010; Trittler, 2017).

Blurry and bright boundaries

In certain contexts, depending on, for instance, the socio-political and historical context, and contexts that are characterized by strong inequalities, notions of 'us' vs. 'them' may harden and can become clearly demarcated and unambiguous. Alba (2005) refers to these boundaries as 'bright', in which groups are divided into clear-cut categories. In other cases, group boundaries may be ambiguous, fluid and 'blurry', which for example allows individuals to shift and move between groups, and results in a situation where members are not easily classified in social groups and boundary markers are of less significance (Alba, 2005; Albeda et al, 2018). Blurred boundaries are less relevant for everyday interactions, less exclusionary and less institutionalized (Wimmer, 2013). Thus, symbolic boundaries can vary in permeability, salience, durability and visibility (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Wimmer, 2013) and a bright

boundary, for instance, can become blurred, and vice versa (Alba, 2005; Wimmer, 2013). It is therefore necessary to specify why certain 'identities' matter to different degrees in various social and historical contexts, and how group boundaries are salient (or not) across contexts and groups.

For instance, Phalet, Maliepaard, Fleischmann & Güngör (2013) show that the salience of religion as an identity marker can vary between city contexts. In Antwerp and Rotterdam, the religious symbolic boundary seems to be brighter than in Brussels and Amsterdam, as there is, for example, a more polarized labour market and greater success of right-wing political movements in these cities. Boundaries can also be variable, not only between contexts, but also over time. For instance, while previously, socio-economic and region-of-origin categories (e.g. guest workers, immigrants) were used to delineate a symbolic boundary, this has shifted towards religious categories, whereby anti-immigrant stances are particularly targeted at Muslims (Brubaker, 2013).

Another comparison often made is between the European context and that of the United States. Scholars argue that 'Muslim', particularly, is a social category and salient marker for identity and group boundaries in West European settings, while 'race' is a more prominent marker for categorizations in the US (Becker et al, 2023; Foner & Alba, 2008; Trittler, 2019). However, empirical studies equally indicate that in the US too, 'Muslim' has become an important marker for constructing boundaries, as there has been a rise in anti-Muslim prejudices and Islamophobia (Ogan, Willnat, Pennington & Bashir, 2014; Sherkat & Lehman, 2018). In Europe, on the other hand, 'race' and 'ethnicity' also matters in structuring social relations and constructing moral hierarchies (although there is a strong taboo against acknowledging the concept of 'race' in Europe, in both scholarly work and public debates) (Jugert, Kaiser, Laluna & Civitillo, 2021).

Social boundaries and institutionalization of symbolic boundaries

Symbolic boundaries can also impact actual social opportunities and can lead to or reinforce existing social boundaries (e.g. educational or income inequalities between groups, segregation in neighbourhoods). And, the other way around, symbolic boundaries can be impacted or further reinforced by existing social boundaries and institutionalized forms of social differences. Social boundaries are described as "objectified forms of social differences, manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities" (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p.168-169). As Alba (2005,

p.27) argues, the construction and negotiation of symbolic boundaries is dependent on the social context and is constructed from *"*cultural, legal and institutional materials that are already at hand, and thus they depend in a path-dependent way on the prior histories of the societies and groups involved*"*. Social boundaries can thus shape the social context within which symbolic boundaries are constructed.

As symbolic categories can become normalized, they can legitimatize the institutionalization of social inequality and maintenance of existing power hierarchies (Lamont et al, 2015; Lamont et al, 2016; Wimmer, 2013). For instance, as I discussed in my introductory chapter, the symbolic othering of Muslims has led to the introduction of a headscarf ban in, for example, education, and this institutionalization of a symbolic boundary further legitimizes already existing unequal social opportunities for Muslim women. Thus, identifying as Muslim in Belgium and most West European countries has not only symbolic consequences (e.g. being a cultural other), it also leads to real and actual experiences of social exclusion, which again further brightens religious symbolic boundaries.

It is important to note that individuals and social groups are not completely determined by this reality. Social actors can actively and strategically try to resist, challenge, take action and change these unequal social opportunities. For instance, activist groups such as BOEH! and individuals (e.g. a student in a high school in Leuven) have taken legal action against a headscarf ban in education (Dequeecker, Azabar & Akhanday, 2022). In symbolic boundary theory, we can recognize structural external realities, power relations and imbalances between individuals and groups, as well as individual and collective agency within these (unequal) social structures (Lamont et al, 2015; Wimmer, 2013).

Symbolic boundary work

As this approach allows agency of social actors, research looks into how these actors (such as individuals, groups, social movements, the state, etc.) can participate in *boundary work* to rework and engage with the social categorizations and structural inequalities they are confronted with. In my study, I analyse how young people construct, rework, negotiate, maintain, etc. symbolic boundaries in their superdiverse context. And, in doing so, I consider how they construct dignified group identities, and preserve, negotiate or reclaim their self-worth (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont et al, 2015).

Researchers have delineated various *boundary strategies* and documented various ways in which individuals and groups engage in boundary work to negotiate social and symbolic

exclusion, or to regain or assert their self-worth and dignity (e.g. Fleming, Lamont & Welburn, 2012; Lamont et al, 2016; Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Wimmer 2013). For instance, boundaries can be blurred or shifted, and stigmatization and social exclusion reworked, by using universalizing strategies in which a shared sense of humanity and broader collective identities are emphasized (Beaman, 2016; Fleming et al, 2012; Lamont, Morning & Mooney, 2002). For instance, symbolic or social exclusion can be bypassed by focusing on supranational identities (such as a European identity or a cosmopolitan identity), making it possible to claim equal group status and draw on universal morals, such as that we are all human across all boundaries (while giving recognition to cultural differences and multiple social identities) (Erisen, 2017; Lamont et al, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016).

Existing moral hierarchies and unequal power relations can also be challenged (Wimmer, 2013). For instance, Modood (2019) shows in his study that Muslims in the UK self-organize to collectively claim rights and reclaim an equal social position in society something also seen in other social movements, such as Black Lives Matter. De Jong and Duyvendak (2023) show how Turkish-Dutch youth navigate and destigmatize their identities by – among other things – claiming their right to their cultural distinctiveness.

Individuals and groups can also further brighten boundaries by emphasizing moral superiority. Sherman (2005) showed how luxury hotel staff strategically emphasize moral superiority in relation to the staff of 'lesser' hotels to construct and negotiate their own self-worth, as their social status is also related to the clientele of those luxury hotels.

Social actors thus actively, creatively and strategically engage in symbolic boundary work, to rework the social categorizations they are confronted with, and in this way orient themselves in their social environments. It is also important to question who can establish or legitimate their power position by drawing or reworking symbolic boundaries. Dominant (ethno-religious) majority groups are more able to impose their definitions and interpretations upon others, while minoritized groups are limited in the resources (material and nonmaterial) needed to rework the constructed boundaries. Boundary making strategies of social actors who are positioned higher in a hierarchical order and are gatekeepers of these positions will be more 'effective' than those of actors positioned further down (Wimmer, 2013). In other words, boundary work is embedded in power dynamics, and dominant groups can present their interpretations of boundaries as 'the norm' and use symbolic categories in a violent way to distinguish themselves from others and preserve their social status, moral superiority and

privileges (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Wimmer, 2013). Indeed, Wimmer (2013) addresses the question of who has the power to impose one set of categorical distinctions rather than another, what level of classification will be most salient in different contexts and how networks of political alliances can determine which distinction will be drawn between 'us' and 'them'. Actors who are in a disadvantaged and underprivileged position are mostly confronted with coercive boundaries that create social exclusion, and are urged to negotiate symbolic and social boundaries, in order to (re)gain recognition, moral worth, power, access to resources, etc. (Van Kerckem, 2014).

Cultural repertoires

Lastly, I also turn to the concept of 'cultural repertoires' to better understand which cultural resources youth can draw on to negotiate symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Small, 2008; Swidler, 1986). Indeed, social actors can develop boundary strategies from historically constituted, culturally available narrative templates (Lamont et al, 2016). Repertoires are seen as 'sets of tools', cultural resources or a 'cultural toolkit' which people can actively draw on to manage their social world, to give meaning to everyday interactions and to position themselves within social settings, vis-à-vis various 'others' (Lizardo & Strand, 2010; O'Brien, 2015; Swidler, 1986). They are culturally available 'caches of ideas' that help social actors give meaning to a multifaceted and often contradictory social reality and construct their identities within it. Some examples of repertoires are neoliberal repertoires (self-reliance, competition, meritocracy) and expressive individualism (authenticity), hierarchy of class culture (dominant middle class), integration policies (assimilation, multiculturalism, superdiversity), gender specific repertoires (masculinity), antiracist repertoires (social justice, human rights), secularism (privatized religiosity), etc. (Cortois & Laermans, 2018; Lamont et al, 2016).

The idea of repertoires has gained significant currency especially in cultural sociology as 'it allows for a measure of individual meaning and agency in mobilizing and choosing a specific configuration of cultural resources, while also stressing the public, and publicly available nature of those resources' (Silber, 2003, p.431). Indeed, some repertoires may be more readily available in one social context than in another, and, within a specific context, more available to one group than to another (Lamont et al, 2016). The idea of a 'toolkit' highlights a non-deterministic character, in which cultural repertoires can enable or constrain, rather than prescribe individuals' patterns of thought and behaviour. Individuals and groups can actively

draw on various elements of repertoires to which they have access, and can creatively combine them to make sense of a particular social situation.

Chapter 3

Understanding the position of religion and Islam in a secular West European context

As Western European societies have become superdiverse, and thus religiously diverse as well, European countries and cities are concerned with how to accommodate immigrant religions, such as Islam (Casanova, 2007; Foner & Alba, 2015; Kivisto, 2014). Which institutional structures and policies on state recognition should be put into place? What norms should be maintained on, for instance, when and where one can publicly express religious beliefs and practices?

In this chapter, I will first explain how Belgium is characterized by secularization trends such as functional differentiation and a process of (de)pillarization, which impacts and challenges the way in which migrant religions such as Islam can be institutionalized and accommodated. Thereafter, I will discuss how in classical secularization theories a religious decline (or even disappearance) was expected in modern societies, while many scholars have rebutted these expectations and studies indicate a religious vitality and pluralism in superdiverse settings. In addition, I will discuss how tensions arise in superdiverse cities, as religion is still expected to take on a privatized and marginalized role in society, while religious communities may also claim public roles. Further, I look into how secular identities in Europe are particularly constructed in relation to Islam, and how in these secularized contexts, a cultural Christian identity remains, or even reoccurs, as an important identity marker for the national imagination.

While my study focuses on symbolic boundary work in interactions between individuals and groups, and I use boundary theory as an analytical lens, I wish, in this chapter, to discuss the broader institutional and historical context in Belgium, and scholarly discussions within sociology of religion, in order to understand how a secular-religious boundary comes about. This will provide a better understanding of the social context within which young people give meaning to their identifications and negotiate group boundaries.

The accommodation of Islam in a functionally differentiated and (de)pillarized setting

At a societal level, scholars in the field of sociology of religion study the changing meaning of religion for the overall societal structure and separate social systems in western Europe (Dobbelaere, 2002; Casanova, 1994). While pre-modern societies are often seen to be integrated by ‘a sacred canopy’ (Berger, 1967), modern society became characterized by

functional differentiation. This refers to the 'splitting-up' into various functional domains or societal spheres such as politics, economy, law, education, religion, art, etc. These became autonomous fields and therefore act as diverse subsystems with their own logic (Verschraegen, 2002). Every individual has the possibility to move from one domain to another and participate in different subsystems, taking up distinctive social roles such as consumer, legal client, voter, student, etc. (Cortois & Laermans, 2018). While historically, sectors such as education and social services were controlled by the Church, they gradually emerged as autonomous spheres, in which the responsibility belongs to the state (Davie, 2013). Religion thus became a subsystem next to education, healthcare, the state, etc. and no longer functions as an overarching system (Cortois & Laermans, 2018; Swatos & Christiano, 1999). Religion and politics became disestablished (separation of Church and state) (Torrekens, 2015), and now religion as a subsystem particularly engages with themes such as meaning, belief systems and morality (Dobbelaere, 1999). Few scholars dispute this process of functional differentiation in modern societies in Europe (Casanova, 1994; Davie 2013; Dobbelaere, 2000; Hellemans, 2020; Paul, 2018).

Further, on an organizational level, classical secularization theory studied the decline in Church authority and the internal secularization of religious organizations (i.e. to what extent are religious organizations adapting to a secularized environment?) (Dobbelaere, 1981). In the case of Belgium (as well as in the Netherlands), functional differentiation led to a process of pillarization in which the state was based on three (vertically organized) pillars – Catholic, Socialist and Liberal – which were all institutionalized through, for example, political parties, education, health and social welfare services, etc. The Catholic pillar organized itself so as to preserve Church control over the Catholic part of the population and duplicated services in those sectors that were functionally differentiated from the religious subsystem. The Catholic pillar therefore had its own Catholic union as a political party, provided social services and organized education in a network of Catholic schools (Dobbelaere, 2000, 2010; Hellemans, 2020).

Scholars expected a de-institutionalization of religious authority and a concomitant process of de-pillarization, whereby the Catholic pillar would be dismantled. The evidence is, however, mixed. While there are clear indications of 'de-pillarization' and a declining integrative capacity of the Catholic pillar, Belgium (unlike the Netherlands) still has a Catholic pillar that did not completely disintegrate but adapted its organization, as well as its 'collective consciousness', to the secularized societal environment (Dobbelaere, 2010; Hellemans, 2020).

Due to this ‘new collective consciousness’, the schools, trade unions, sick funds, etc. of the Catholic pillar remain viable, and thus did not follow a clear de-pillarization process (Dobbelaere, 2010). The Catholic pillar thus remains institutionalized in Belgium, raising the question of how other religious minorities and immigrant religions should organize themselves to also gain state recognition and funding.

Belgium has made agreements with other religious faiths (Roman, Catholic, Jewish, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical and Islamic) to grant them autonomy of organization, collaboration with the state and recognition in the public sphere. For instance, religion classes organized in public schools are financially supported by the state, and salaries and the retirement pensions of teachers and religious staff of various recognized faiths are paid by the public authorities (Torrekens, 2015). In 1974, Islam was formally recognized as a subsidized religion, thus gaining a formally equal legal status to that of the historically dominant Catholic Church (Fleishmann & Phalet, 2018). However, as there was no such thing as an ‘Islamic pillar’ or a centralized and hierarchical Muslim authority, the processes of institutionalization were hampered by the public authorities. In order to receive state funding, Muslim communities were required to organize themselves centrally and had to set up a nationally representative Islamic council as a partner to the Belgian state (Fleishmann & Phalet, 2018). The EMB, ‘Executive of Muslims in Belgium’, was set up and officially recognized in 1999. It was – and still is – difficult to find representatives for the EMB, as Muslim communities are internally diverse, and the pressure to organize themselves in this way reduces Muslim communities to one homogenous group. This reveals that European societies find it difficult to understand a religion that is not organized in the same way as the centralized and hierarchical Christian Church. And while social scientists and politicians at the time were identifying and calling for a process of de-institutionalization of religious systems in Europe, the public authorities were forcing other religious faiths to centralize (Torrekens, 2015). Recently (2022), the minister of justice in Belgium started a procedure to withdraw the recognition of the EMB, which could end its formalized role.

It must be said that the accommodation of Islam by Belgian authorities was mostly motivated by the idea that the labour migrants from Morocco and Turkey who came to Belgium in the 1960s and ‘70s would only stay temporarily. It was intended to make sure that Muslim guest workers would not lose their cultural and religious roots, and thus would not stay. Official recognition of Islam was thus related, to some extent, to Belgium’s diplomatic and economic interests (Torrekens, 2015). It is no surprise then, that Islam still experiences great difficulties

in gaining recognition and state funding for practices such as the building of mosques, even though it is a recognized religion and tries to organize itself centrally, as is expected of it (*Open Society Foundation*, 2011; Torrekens, 2015). When mosques are built, there is often a strong resistance from residents and in local public debates. For instance, in 2018 a mosque in the city of Leuven was vandalized, and political parties such as Vlaams Belang have organized many protests against the building of mosques.

There is also an ongoing debate about the recognition of Islamic schools. Public education is partly still organized through the Catholic pillar, and there are also, for instance, Jewish schools which independently organize their education. However, Islamic schools are met with strong resistance (Ağirdağ, 2020), even when research in the Netherlands – where there are already more than fifty recognized Islamic schools – shows that students from Islamic schools have better educational performances and that these schools have a high educational quality (as they are, for instance, more inclusive and provide safer environments for Muslim students) (Driessen, Ağirdağ & Merry, 2016).

Thus, it is clear that while Christian institutions in a secular society successfully secure an integral place in the political landscape and public sector, minoritized religions such as – and mostly – Islam, although formally recognized, are regulated and shaped under unequal conditions and thus are not granted the same legitimacy in public life (Amir-Moazami, 2022). While I do not aim to further analyse the difficulties which Islam faces in establishing its rightful place in Belgium, the above information allows us to understand discrimination and how this further shapes the way in which individuals give meaning to their social positions in society and their religious affiliations.

Religious decline in modern societies, or religious change and vitality?

Although there are varying theories and studies on secularization trends in Europe, and the debates are contentious, classical secularization theories were – and are still – quite influential in discussing and explaining the position of religion in modern societies. Classical secularization theory has its roots in the 19th century, but mostly took off in sociology of religion in the 1960s – ‘80s (e.g. Berger, 1967; Bruce, 2002; Norris & Inglehart, 2011; Wilson, 2004). Proponents of this theory aimed to formulate and claim universal and explanatory models of secularization processes on different societal levels (Ivanescu, 2016). Scholars in this field expected that the social significance and influence of religious institutions and religious authority would decline in the public sphere, and that this would translate into an

individual secularization in which religion becomes individualized and privatized, with less emphasis on the institutional and ritual dimensions of religion (e.g. less church attendance and less affiliation with religious morals and communities) (Casanova, 1994). According to these scholars, this would lead to an overall decline and even disappearance of religious beliefs and practices. They expected that the more modernized and urbanized a society was, the less religious it would be. Cities were therefore believed to be 'the crucibles of secularization' and modern societies would, it was thought, herald 'the age of the secular city' (Cox, 1965). This secular dominance in Western Europe would be understood, then, as a marker and blueprint for modernity, establishing Western supremacy (Fordahl, 2017; Paul, 2018). Generally, these studies were based on changes experienced by Christianity in Europe, with empirical indications of a quantitative decline in, for instance, Sunday church attendance and Christian religious beliefs and morals (Dobbelaere, 2010; Hellemans, 2007; Verschraegen & Abts, 2022).

However, many scholars within the field have rebutted this positivist assumption of an inevitable decline in religious practices and beliefs and the model of unilinear secularization in Europe (Fordahl, 2017). To present secularization and privatization trends as sociological and universal facts is empirically not entirely correct, and researchers point to religious change and vitality, rather than decline (Davie, 2013; Hellemans, 2007; Ivanescu, 2016). First of all, researchers argue that this religious decline could be specific to European Christianity. For instance, empirical findings in the United States and Europe, displaying similar processes of modernization and urbanization, show that the role of religion in social life and the importance of religion can vary greatly (Foner & Alba, 2008; Ivanescu, 2016; Turner, 2010a). Europe is an exceptional case, rather than the blueprint or universal rule for other world regions and religions (Casanova, 2007; Davie, 2013; Hellemans, 2020; Ivanescu, 2016).

Second, scholars argue that it seems more likely that religion has transformed in European settings, and the focus in research should hence be on religious change and transformation rather than on historical-linear decline (Davie, 2000, 2002; Casanova, 2006; Cooperman & Saghal, 2018). For instance, Davie (2000, 2002) describes the European situation by emphasizing a 'believing without belonging', where individual personal beliefs remain, but are reworked and negotiated, and communal participation declines. It would then be more accurate to speak of the 'unchurching' of the Christian European situation rather than of individual religious decline (Casanova, 2006). Moreover, scholars study new forms of spirituality and religion and refer to an eclectic and selective 'bricolage' (Woodhead, Heelas & Seel, 2005) of

religious beliefs and practices (Dobbelaere, 2011; Turner, 2010a), in which one has the right to choose and mix one's beliefs and combine elements of various belief and meaning systems. This process is also referred to as 'do it yourself' religion, 'pick and mix' religion and 'religion à la carte' (Dobbelaere, 1988; Turner, 2010a, 2017). It is argued then that this 'subjective turn of religion' and processes of religious individualization, competition and consumerism lead to new forms of spirituality and religiosity, and thus a religious revival, vitality and religious pluralism in superdiverse cities, rather than the disappearance of religion (Stevenson, Dunn, Possamai & Piracha, 2010; Turner, 2010a; Wolffe, 2017).

It must be noted that these theories on bricolage still mainly centre around European Christianity or spirituality, in which individual religious experiences are negotiated and even 'consumed'. Fewer studies focus on how these trends unfold in non-Christian religions such as Islam. Studies also show an active and creative religious bricolage among, for example, Muslim youth, who negotiate and combine their religious identities with American youth culture (O'Brien, 2017). Other studies also show similar individualization trends in which, for example, Muslims in Europe speak of an 'Islam of the Heart', i.e. a focus on individual and intrinsic religious beliefs rather than a focus on religious practices (Killian, 2007). However, the latter could also point to a strategy adopted by minoritized religions to navigate the predominantly secular context and to avoid stigmatization (Beaman, 2016; Ryan, 2014).

These individualization trends among Muslims are often understood in the same way as individualization trends among European Christians, who seem to develop an individualized form of religion outside a broader religious framework and a less communal form of religion. Less attention is directed to how individualization can still happen within communal, institutionalized and public forms of religion, which could remain relevant for non-Christian and immigrant religions. Indeed, scholars such as Fadil (2005) and Mahmood (2011) argue that individualization can also happen *through* religion, i.e. within a religious framework rather than outside of it. This is especially relevant when religion is an important source and marker for collective identification, which is often the case for immigrant minorities. Indeed, empirical studies show that Christian and Muslim minorities in European contexts strongly identify with their collective religious identities and participate in communal and ritual practices (Beaman, 2015; Brubaker, 2013; Fleishmann & Phalet, 2018; Karlsen & Nazroo, 2015; Maxwell & Bleich, 2014; O'Brien, 2017; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). Thus, Fadil (2005) argues that more focus is needed on how Muslims can individualize themselves within a religious collective, and how individualization could also be less a matter of religious

bricolage, and, for instance, more of placing oneself within a religious tradition, and finding new interpretations of it.

Lastly, scholars such as Durkheim (2016 [1912]) and Coleman (2003) rebut an inevitable religious decline in modern societies, by arguing that religion, and religious networks, remain important as they function as a source for social integration and cohesion, for constructions of collective identities for social groups and as an important source for social capital, in which people build networks and social relations. This is definitely important for ethno-racial and religious minoritized communities that have less (material and non-material) resources in society. Their religious networks could be an important source for social capital (for those who engage in these networks) (Van Praag, Stevens & Van Houtte, 2016), which could, for instance, benefit their educational chances (Hemmerechts, Kavadias & Ağirdağ, 2018 Van Praag, Stevens & Van Houtte, 2016).

To conclude, many empirical studies show religious vitality and pluralism in various superdiverse contexts in European societies (Becci, Burchardt & Giorda, 2017; Fordahl & Ragnarsdóttir, 2021; Paul, 2018; Ivanescu, 2016; Wolffe, 2017). Religion, thus, in its various forms, remains at the centre of modern society and can make new claims in the public sphere, which I will discuss in the following section.

Expressing religiosity in private vs. in public

So, while scholars point to a religious vitality in modern European societies, and social institutions such as education and social security in Belgium are also partly organized within a Catholic pillar, Modood (2019) argues that a more radical secularism or 'strong secularism' has become influential, especially since 9/11, and most visibly in countries such as France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium. This 'strong' secularism can be understood as a political-philosophical normative understanding of secularization. Within this 'strong' secularism, there is a normative claim that there is an assuming unbridgeable gap between religion and modernity, and 'the secular' is constructed in a binary contradiction to religious beliefs, attitudes and practices, in which the latter are seen as backwards or pre-modern (Casanova, 2006; Sunier, 2016). Within this dominant repertoire, religion is allowed a legitimate place only in the private sphere, while secularity has a normative claim to the public sphere (Asad, 2003; Paul, 2018; Ivanescu, 2016). So, while I discussed previously that scholars in the field of sociology of religion rebutted the claim that religion is only privatizing, it can be said that there is a normative and imposing belief in West European settings that religion s*hould*

be privatized. While superdiverse and religiously diverse European societies may tolerate individual religious freedom and choices (Casanova, 2007) there is thus a strong suspicion of claims based on religion in the public sphere, and religion is expected to be practised and expressed in private (Casanova, 2007; Foner & Alba, 2008; Juchtmans & Nicaise, 2014; Trittler, 2019).

This, however, creates some tensions in superdiverse settings. While the typical Western European Christian may have transformed their religiosity into a personal affair (but not necessarily), more communal, collective and/or public expressions of religion by Muslims or other religious minorities can challenge this secular truce (Ribberink, Achterberg & Houtman, 2017a). For instance, religious practices such as Islamic prayer can blur the boundaries between places of worship and public spaces (Göle, 2017), just like other visible symbols, such as mosques, flags and headscarves, are often perceived as trespassing on moral public space (De Jong & Duyvendak, 2023). In addition, scholars argue that (new) religious movements, communities and organizations do not necessarily accept this privatized and marginalized role. They may equally claim a public role, and take on political and social tasks (Casanova, 1994). For instance, studies show that in superdiverse cities, faith-based organizations enter the political and public sphere, where they operate, for instance, as welfare providers (Stevenson et al., 2010) or as important civil society organizations which can be a focus for collective mobilization (Modood, 2019). Becci et al (2017) discuss the cases of Potsdam and Turin, in which Christian traditions, immigrant minority religions and new religious movements negotiate their spaces in superdiverse settings, by reworking and claiming their place in public life.

These studies are in line with more recent literature and scholarly debates on post-secular approaches, that has emerged to challenge this normative stances on secularization, in which religion takes on a privatized role. The term ‘post-secular’ was coined by Habermas (2008) who argued that a secular state should enable the flourishing of religious traditions in the public sphere, and that religion should be seen as a positive contributor to public life (Paul, 2018). For instance, Paul (2018) discusses how religious leaders, social workers and policy makers in Vancouver came together to discuss how religion can contribute to their local policies. This post-secular perspective then provides an alternative to the dominant repertoire of secularism and shifts the question from how religion exists ‘outside’ public life to ‘*how religion is a constructive contribution to city life’*. It must be noted, however, that Habermas’ post-secular

approach was also critiqued by other post-secular thinkers, as his approach still holds an idea of a secular state as 'neutral' and secularity as a universal truth (Casanova, 2013).

In general, post-secular thinking is interesting as it allows a shift in thinking about the role and significance of religion in current superdiverse societies and to a public resurgence of religion itself, that challenges the normative secular self-understanding of modernity, and enables a curiosity about the multiple ways in which people can be religious, as well as secular (Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Beyer & Ramji, 2013). This approach moves away from a binary, dual and oppositional relationship between secularity and religion; both are rather seen as dynamic, contested, interrelated and interdependent, but not necessarily each other's opposites (Asad, 2003). It therefore no longer enforces these dividing lines and roles between, for instance, religion and science, faith and reason, tradition and innovation (Beaumont & Baker, 2011). The claims of religion is then no longer dismissed as irrational assertions, but accepted as legitimate components of public dialogue (Turner 2010a).

However, despite of these scholarly debates and empirical studies, a repertoire of secularism remains highly influential and powerful among scholars, journalists, politicians and activists in academic and public debates, as an interpretation framework for determining the role of religion in modern societies (Paul, 2018). Therefore, Western European societies continue to have difficulties in recognizing a legitimate role for religion in public life or the mobilization and organization of collective (religious) group identities (Casanova, 2007). If religious communities wish for full membership of the (sub)national community, they are expected to not prioritize their religious identities and practices (De Jong & Duyvendak, 2023; Modood, 2019) and to assimilate with an expectation of privatizing their religion, in order to be seen as 'integrated' into these secular societies (Amir-Moazami, 2022). This even legitimizes institutionalized inequalities, such as the establishment of headscarf bans in many social settings, such as the public administration, education and public swimming pools (Azabar, 2022; Torrekens, 2015). These bans limit Muslim women's access to education and the labour market and thus their social opportunities. However, rather than targeting these bans as an attack on individual freedom and expression – which is also a core value in Western Europe – , the responsibility is placed on individuals – here, Muslim women – to assimilate, in order to become an acceptable and legitimate subject of the nation (Amir-Moazami, 2022).

Normative secular and cultural Christian identities in relation to Muslim identities

Due to the influence of these classical secularization theories and a dominant political-philosophical repertoire of secularism, Europe has developed a normative secularist self-understanding and identity (Paul, 2018), which interprets processes of privatization of religion as 'normal' and 'progressive', and as a quasi-normative consequence of being a 'modern' and 'enlightened' European (Casanova, 2006). Interestingly, Casanova (2006, 2007) argues that this taken for granted and widely shared imaginary of Europe as secular functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which Western European nations imagine themselves as secular communities. Therefore, they discount and undercount their own persistent religiosity and instead think of themselves and expect to be irreligious. Secular identities are then at the centre of Europeans' imagination of collective identity and national belonging (Casanova, 2006; Edgell, 2012; Edgell, Hartmann, Stewart & Gerteis, 2016; Foner & Alba, 2008). All this is in sharp contrast to the United States, where people are believed and expected to be religious. For instance, according to researchers, the centrality of religiosity in Americans' imagination of collective identity shows that it is a crucial dimension of American cultural citizenship, in which atheists or non-religious individuals are constructed as moral outsiders (Edgell, 2012; Edgell et al, 2016).

Not only is this secular imagination constructed in opposition to religion in general; the previous sections also show that it is specifically related and constructed to Muslim identities (Casanova, 2007; Ribberink et al, 2017a; Trittler, 2019). Indeed, public debates on negative social connotations of religion mostly focus on the religious practices and values of Islam, rather than of religion in general (Cesari, 2004; Foner & Alba, 2008; Kivisto, 2014; Sunier, 2014; Trittler, 2019; Turner, 2010a). Secular values are linked to 'Western' and 'liberal' values such as gender equality, freedom of speech, neutrality, individual freedom, separation of Church and state, etc. and these are constructed as inherently incompatible with and in opposition to Islam (Aziz, 2017; Brubaker, 2017; Cesari, 2004; Fadil et al, 2014; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Foner & Alba, 2008; Modood, 2019; Ribberink et al, 2017a; Sunier, 2014; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016; Trittler, 2019; Zemni, 2011). A secular European identity, then, gains its meaning in opposition to Islam.

Ribberink, Achterberg and Houtman (2017b) interestingly found in their study that non-religious individuals do not contest religion more in secular countries, but are specifically intolerant towards Muslims. Also Simsek, Tubergen & Fleischmann (2022) found that

symbolic boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims are the strongest among young people in various schools in Western Europe (rather than between religious and non-religious young people). They argue that anti-Muslim sentiments and stigmatization are not only related to 'Islam', but also to ethnic prejudice and xenophobia. We also see this in the othering of Muslim identities in relation to a culturalized Christian identity. Not only are Muslim identities constructed as a religious, ethno-racial and cultural 'Other' in relation to Europe's secularity, but Islam is also constructed as a non-European and non-Christian religion. Despite the secularized appearance of European societies, Christian identities remain an important part and marker for the imagination of (sub)national cultures and belongings (Joppke, 2018; Laniel, 2016; Storm, 2011; Trittler, 2019). Christian practices and rituals still have a symbolic meaning in secularized European countries and are seen as part of the nation's heritage (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Storm, 2011). Scholars argue that we can speak of a socio-cultural Christianity in Belgium that remains anchored in important institutions, such as education (Dobbelaere, 2010). Hervieu-Léger (2000) describes the situation in Europe as 'belonging without believing', emphasizing the importance of a Christian identity as part of Europe's cultural heritage. This does not point necessarily to a revival of Christian beliefs (Joppke, 2018). Rather, it seems that a cultural Christian identity as a salient characteristic of the national culture has mostly been observed in discourses of national-populist right parties; these discourses have gained prominence in Western Europe and are often mobilized and weaponized as an argument to legitimize the social and symbolic exclusion of Muslim immigrants and communities (Brubaker, 2017; Casanova, 2007; Joppke, 2018; Storm, 2011; Trittler, 2019). For instance, the chair of the extreme right-wing political party Vlaams Belang stated that *'in our society, the Christian, the Flemish and the white should be the dominant factor'* (Van de Velden & D'hoore, 2021). Christianity is then transformed from a religious set of beliefs to a notion of national belonging and citizenship. Therefore, secular and Christian cultural identities are intertwined in rarely verbalized modes among Europeans (Casanova, 2007).

To conclude, Muslim identities are thus constructed and problematized as both a non-Christian religious other, and a cultural other of a modern, liberal and secular West (Casanova, 2007; Ivanescu, 2016; Modood, 2019; Sunier, 2014). It is in this context of a 'various Otherizations' of Muslims that I aim to study how young people give meaning to their identities and engage in boundary work, challenged by a dominant cultural repertoire of secularism, in which mono-religious traits remain dominant and institutionalized as a cultural Christian identity (Modood, 2019).

Chapter 4

A mixed-method design

In this study, I employ both quantitative and qualitative methods, thus using a mixed-method design. First, I apply a quantitative analysis, since this method offers an effective way to understand broader trends in identity formation among young people (for instance Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Maene, Van Rossem, Stevens, 2021; Maene, D'hondt, Van Lissa, Thijs & Stevens, 2022). Previous quantitative studies mostly focus on, for example, comparing integration policies of nations, and the impact of the societal context on (religious) identifications and boundaries in Europe (e.g. Connor, 2010; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Phalet, Maliepaard, Fleischmann & Güngör, 2013; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016). To give an example, Bail (2008) studies configurations of symbolic boundaries against immigrants in Europe on a macro-level, using the 2003 European Social Survey, by comparing cross-national variations in the salience of symbolic boundaries. In this dissertation, I rather focus on identity formation and boundary work on an individual (and interactional) level. I adopt a quantitative approach, as this enables me to study to what extent youth identify with various social, and collective, identities and to determine factors that can possibly affect young people's identity constructions (such as discrimination and relations with their teachers). Such an approach is useful, as it gives me the opportunity to explore some themes regarding collective identity formation with a larger group of young people. It is important to note that the quantitative part of my studies is mainly intended to explore some hypotheses on identity formation (that are in line with other previous studies), rather than to make universal claims. It further guides me to more in-depth analyses on the topics of identity construction and symbolic boundary work, thus supporting and preceding my qualitative analysis. In other words, my data collection follows a sequential design (Small, 2011). This term describes a method in which prior data can inform the following data collection, allowing, for instance, specific questions to emerge from the processes of data collection (Small, 2011). In my study, my quantitative analysis mostly guided my selection of schools for the qualitative part of the study.

Second, I use a qualitative method to gain deeper insights into meaning-making processes. How do my young respondents give meaning to their superdiverse context and multiple belongings? How are symbolic boundaries constructed, reworked, negotiated, etc. in various contexts and how do individuals give meaning to these boundary processes? Qualitative methods can grasp the active, processual and continuous ways individuals engage in boundary

work in social interactions. These meaning-making processes are hard to study with a survey, and therefore researchers use methods such as in-depth interviews, observations, document analysis, etc. (for instance, Kostet, Verschraegen & Clycq, 2021; Lamont et al, 2016; Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019). Therefore, with my quantitative approach I will discuss some general relations and descriptive findings on identity formations, while I use a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of how young people give meaning to social identities and group boundaries, and how they participate in symbolic boundary work.

This research project treats the quantitative and qualitative approaches as equal and complementary within the research process (Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Pearce, 2012; Small, 2011). Each approach is fully worked out in two empirical chapters: Chapters 5 and 6 use a multilevel regression analysis, while Chapters 7 and 8 contain qualitative methods using in-depth interviews. The separate studies were set out as single method studies, thus adopting an equal status design, with an equal use of both quantitative and qualitative methods throughout my dissertation (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). A mixed-method approach is particularly useful, as the two methods support, complement and strengthen each other (Small, 2011). My research thus acknowledges the strengths of a variety of methods, perspectives and approaches, instead of treating one set of research tools as better than the other (Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Pearce, 2012). It contributes to a cooperative approach and methodological pluralism which values all methods in their own right (Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Pearce, 2012). In this methodological chapter, I will discuss briefly the research context of my study. I have already covered this broadly in the previous chapters; therefore, I will only touch upon some of the main relevant points. Subsequently, I will discuss which schools and respondents I have selected and why, and thereafter how I gained access. Next, I will elaborate on how I collected and analysed my data, and conclude this chapter with some reflections on my position as a researcher.

Research context: the superdiverse city of Antwerp and Flemish secondary education

My research is conducted in the superdiverse city of Antwerp. I already discussed the case of Antwerp in my introductory chapter and explained why it is an interesting research context. Youth in Antwerp are brought up in a superdiverse context, and are urged to navigate diverse peer relations, as well as multiple belongings and social identities. Antwerp is characterized by anti-immigrant and right-wing policies and discourses, and research has already indicated clear ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries, whereby minority communities are often stigmatized

and socially excluded (Albeda, Tersteeg, Oosterlynck & Verschraegen, 2018; Phalet et al, 2013; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). The city is also a majority-minority setting, in which previously dominant majority youth have to navigate a new change in their social position (Crul, 2018; Kraus & Crul, 2022).

My research focuses on young people and takes place within secondary schools. Schools are important research sites, as students tend to spend most of their time in this institutional context, where they engage in social relations and interactions with peers and teachers. Schools provide a physical site where peer cultures, friendships and identities are formed across (or not across) categories of social difference, and it is a place where boundaries and dominant cultural repertoires are produced, reproduced but also reworked and called into question (Bucholtz, 2010).

Recently, there have been reforms in Flemish secondary education. However, my research took place in a Flemish educational system that can be categorized as an early tracking system (from the age of 12-13 years old, pupils must choose a specific track with a distinct curriculum), with three main tracks: general (ASO), technical (TSO) and vocational (BSO) education. The vocational track steers young people to the labour market after their studies, while ASO and TSO education mostly steer towards tertiary education. KSO, artistic education, also steers students towards tertiary education.

Flemish education is characterized by strong and persisting inequalities, mainly related to the socio-economic status and migration background of students (see overview of studies in Ağirdağ, 2020). There is an overrepresentation of students with a migration background and lower socio-economic background in vocational training and part-time education (Ağirdağ, 2016; Van Caudenberg, Clycq & Timmerman, 2020): these are often stigmatized as ‘lower’ educational tracks for students not competent and/or intelligent enough for the ‘prestigious’ general track. In addition, the educational system is characterized by a tendency to start in ‘higher’ academic tracks and to ‘downstream’ to ‘lower’ tracks, often referred to as the ‘cascade system’. Students can change from a general to a technical or vocational track, but seldom the other way around. Students with a migration background are more likely to be advised by teachers to change their track to TSO or BSO. Teachers generally have a perception of lower educational performances among youth with a migration background and often link lower educational performances to their ethno-cultural identity features (Ağirdağ, 2016; Boone, Thys, Van Avermaet & Van Houtte, 2018; Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne & Sibley,

2016). I experienced this myself during my survey research in a sixth-grade TSO class (social and technical sciences), which predominantly consisted of students with a migration background. The students were very interested in my studies in sociology and asked me many questions – they aspired to pursue that field of study, which made sense as they were studying social sciences. The teacher of the class joined the conversation and turned to me, saying (while rolling her eyes) *'they all aim too high'*. This left me wondering if she would have said that if this were a class with students without a migration background.

In addition to this hierarchical tracking system, there are various assimilationist practices in Flemish education. For instance, a mono-lingual approach is dominant (Flemish). Multilingual education and linguistic diversity are underappreciated, even though various studies indicate that a multilingual approach offers an opportunity to close the gap between Dutch-speaking and non-Dutch-speaking students (See Ağirdağ 2020, p.164-173). Students who speak other languages in the classroom or the playground, such as Turkish, Farsi, etc., are often shamed and punished for using their 'mother tongue'. In addition, this mono-cultural and assimilationist approach is seen in many schools that have clothing rules mostly targeting Muslim girls, such as a headscarf ban and a ban on wearing long skirts. As a result of this headscarf ban, many female Muslims are also denied access to teaching jobs (Lechkar, 2017). This contributes to the significant contrast between teachers and students in Antwerp. In 2019, 93.2% of the teachers in Flemish education do not have a migration background (*Nulmeting herkomst leerkrachten in het Vlaamse onderwijs*, 2021), which can create clear ethnic boundaries between teachers and pupils, especially in Antwerp, where 76.4% of the population of children and young people have a migration background (Opgroeien, 2022).

Overall, the context within which my respondents have to give meaning to their social relations and identifications and engage in symbolic boundary work has clear symbolic and social ethnic and religious boundaries. This has to be taken into account if we seek to understand identity constructions among youth in a superdiverse city.

Gaining access and sample

For the quantitative part of my study, I conducted a survey with 1.039 students from seventeen secondary schools in Antwerp. For the qualitative part I selected two schools, where I conducted in-depth interviews with forty students. First, I will discuss the composition and selection of the schools, and thereafter the composition of the respondents.

Schools

In the first part of my study, I contacted 86 secondary schools from various educational networks in Antwerp (subsidized free schools such as Catholic Education Flanders, GO! Education, subsidized public schools) through a first mailing. After a second mailing, schools were contacted by telephone. This resulted in 17 participating schools. They all gave informed consent and received an information letter to let parents know about the research.

As my research focuses on understanding identity formation and boundary work in superdiverse contexts, I needed to select schools with various ethnic compositions (for instance heterogeneous vs. homogeneous) and schools in various neighbourhoods (for instance superdiverse neighbourhood vs. a predominantly white neighbourhood). In addition, I aimed to study a variety of educational tracks, as at the beginning of my research I also wanted to include social class boundaries in my analysis. Although we eventually did not examine class boundaries, they remain relevant: symbolic boundaries intersect, and as stated before, youth with a migration background are overrepresented in vocational tracks, which are stigmatized as 'lower' tracks. Thus, if we want to study how youth give meaning to symbolic categories, it is important to study young people in various educational tracks.

The participating schools vary in neighbourhood location, available educational tracks and ethnic composition. Eight schools were in Antwerp city centre, four in the neighbourhood of Merksem, and one each in Wilrijk, Borgerhout, Deurne, Berchem and Linkeroever. Six schools offer the three main educational tracks, four schools offer TSO and/or BSO, seven schools ASO and/or TSO. The schools have a varied ethnic composition, measured by the Flemish Ministry of Education using home language of the students (there is no other way in Flanders to measure ethnic diversity, as there are no measures for reporting religious backgrounds of students). Three schools have over 60% of students with another home language next to Dutch, 10 schools have 30–60% of such students, and four schools have fewer than 30% (Agodi, 2017). It is striking that our sample has a high degree of diversity. Many schools taking part in the study also indicated that they wanted to participate, as they were often confronted with questions on identity formation and on how to manage group boundaries in their schools. Therefore, my research sample contains schools that already report some forms of boundary processes at play in their specific context.

In the second part of my study, I selected two schools from the previous sample used in the quantitative study. Only two schools were selected, as my study mostly focuses on social

relations and individual interactions, for instance between students, and thus requires boundary work within schools, rather than analysing and comparing institutional contexts. By focusing on two schools only, I could select more students in each school; this turned out to be very valuable, as students tended to discuss the same cases, stories and social relations and friendships with others whom I could also interview. That enabled me to grasp social interactions between students, which is less easy to do in an interview-setting. Both schools were selected based on the different neighbourhoods they are located in, the educational tracks they offer and the composition of the student population, as well as the easy access and rapport I had built up there.

School 1 is located in the city centre and the superdiverse neighbourhood of Antwerp-Nord. At the time of this research, 70% of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood were from a migration background (*Stad in cijfers*, 2019). School 2 is located in the centre of the residential neighbourhood of Wilrijk. This neighbourhood had 31.1% inhabitants with a migration background (*Stad in cijfers*, 2019). Both schools offer education in academic (ASO), technical (TSO) and vocational (BSO) tracks. The two schools have different ethnic compositions, as measured by the Flemish Ministry of Education by the home language of the students. School 1 has 73.5% students with another home language in addition to Dutch. School 2 has 14.2% students with another home language in addition to Dutch (Agodi, 2019).

However, these numbers do not present the respondents' overall experience and perception of their school. School 1 was often described by respondents and teachers as a school *'without Belgian 'native' students and with 70 different nationalities*'. School 2 was often described as a *'fifty-fifty'* school (50% of students with a migration background, and 50% without). School 1 presents itself as a superdiverse school (on their website, in their general communication, and when teachers and principals introduce the school to me) and has various projects on world citizenship and multiculturalism, art projects on the relation between religion and science and often participates in research projects on identity construction. Many students that I interviewed first attended other schools before coming to this school, and often reflected on their experiences in other schools. Due to the high diversity in this school and since most of the students have a migration background, some of my respondents felt they experienced less discrimination and racism in this school than in others, in which they felt more like a minority. School 2 did not actively present itself as a superdiverse school and did not focus on any activities concerning these topics. While the first school presented superdiversity and intercultural relations as its core values, the second school did adopt the value 'unity in

diversity', but did not further focus on this value when presenting itself. In this school, respondents with a migration background and Muslim respondents tended to experience more identity contestations in their interactions with teachers. However, respondents from both schools expressed various and similar negotiation strategies when engaging in boundary work. In my analysis, I focus on these individual interactions, rather than comparing the differing school contexts.

Students

Our survey included 1.039 students, and we conducted in-depth interviews with 40 students. I selected students from the 5th and 6th year of secondary education, as I aimed to discuss their previous school careers, as well as their ambitions for after secondary education. I wanted students to be able to reflect on past experiences in their school career, in order to understand boundary work over different periods of time. This focus on past experiences emerged as valuable in the interviews, as students reflected on their experiences in various schools they had attended, made comparisons, and discussed various friendship groups they developed throughout their teenage lives and how they navigated between these peer groups.

In Chapter 5, our analysis is based on a sample of Belgian students without a migration background (*n*=211) and a sample of students with a migration background from Morocco (*n*=298). Students were considered as having 'no migration background' when they, both parents and grandmothers were born in Belgium. Students were considered as having a Moroccan background if they were born in Morocco, if one or both of their parents of birth or their grandmothers were born in Morocco. In our sample of Moroccan origin students, the vast majority of respondents – 84.8% – are categorized as second generation (13.5% belonged to the 1st generation and 1.7% to the 3rd generation of immigration). In Chapter 6, the first phase of the analysis is based on a sample of Muslim (*n*=496), Christian (*n*=225) and non-religious (*n*=248) youth. In the second phase, we conducted a subset analysis on the sample of Muslim and Christian youth. The sample of Muslim youth consisted mostly of second-generation migrants (*n*=379; 82.2%). The sample of Christian youth consisted of 34.5% (*n*=76) students without a migration background, 43.6% (*n*=96) second-generation migrants and 21.8% (*n*=48) first-generation migrants.

In Chapters 7 and 8, our analysis is based on forty interviews with students from two schools. Both schools and participating students gave their informed consent. To select my respondents, the student coordinators of both schools gave me access to all the classes in the 5th and 6th year,

to present my research. Students were free to register for the research if they were interested, and I asked about their studies, gender and how they would describe themselves in terms of their religious identification. After that, I carried out a random sample selection, taking into account variation between the respondents in their educational track, gender and religious identification. I adjusted my sampling strategy in the course of the research process. For instance, having conducted some interviews, I noticed trends among students who identified as Muslim, and wanted to better understand their experiences. Thus, I selected more Muslim students, so as to be able to elaborate more on some findings of the previous interviews. The number of students per school and their distribution according to gender, educational track, religious identification and migration background is discussed in table 1. The respondents had various intersecting local, (sub)national, supranational and ethnic identifications, such as Belgian, Flemish, European, world citizen, their city identity, Romanian, Moroccan, Turkish, Ghanaian, Dutch, Spanish, Congolese, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Angolan, Chinese, Russian, Albanian, and Kyrgyz.

Table 1: socio-demographic variables of respondents per school.

Students	**School 1**	**School 2**
# students	17	23
Age	16-19 y/o	16-19 y/o
Educational track		
ASO	7	8
TSO	5	5
BSO	5	10
Gender		
Male	9	6
Female	8	17
Religious identification		
Non-religious	1	4
Muslim	12	14
Christian	3	5
Don’t know	1	0
Migration background		
None	0	6
3rd gen	1	1
2nd gen	14	16
1st gen	2	1

Quantitative analysis: multilevel method

Data collection: survey

The study was conducted over 8 weeks, in February and March 2017, by myself and a master's student. Students filled out a questionnaire in class, with one or two researchers present. The questionnaire was administered in Dutch, on paper or online via Qualtrics, and took approximately 40 minutes. Before collecting the data, I carried out a pilot study with a class group and a group in a youth movement. The questions and the structure of the questionnaire were then refined and finalized.

With this questionnaire (see appendix I), we asked questions about the extent to which young people identify with various collective identities, such as Belgian, world citizen, Christian, Muslim, etc., and how they feel others identify them. We also measured what Europe means to them and to what extent they agree with values concerning cosmopolitan attitudes. As we also wanted to know how factors such as religious practices, discrimination and their relations with their teachers impact their feelings of belonging to various collective identities, we asked questions on religious practices and experiences, friendship and peer relations, social relations at school, relationships with their teachers, feelings of belonging to their school and feelings of unfair treatment and discrimination. With this survey we can analyse the importance, extent and mean levels of collective identities for young people, between and within group differences (for instance, between young people from different educational tracks), and factors that can (or cannot) positively or negatively impact their feelings of belonging to a collective social identity.

Multilevel analysis

A multilevel regression analysis was conducted, as the data consisted of clustered samples of students nested within schools (Hox, 2010). SPSS statistics 24 and MLwiN, a two-level procedure, were used. Although research indicates that most variation occurs within schools between students (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2002), it is important to account for the nested structure of the data, as a single-level analysis would be more prone to ecological and individualistic fallacies (Hox, Moerbeek & Van De Schoot, 2018). First, descriptive univariate and bivariate analysis was applied to the main variables, using SPSS statistics 24. Second, in the multilevel analysis, (using MLwiN, a two-level procedure), step by step models were identified. A zero model was estimated for the dependent variables, to determine the amount of variance that

occurs at the school level. Further, random intercept models were estimated to explore the individual-level effects.

Qualitative analysis: in-depth interviews

Data collection

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, over a period of three months (January – March 2019). They took place at school in a private classroom, were audio recorded, and lasted between 1h30min – 2h.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are useful to understand and delve deeper into identity constructions, meaning-making processes and symbolic boundary making (Kostet, 2022; Lamont et al, 2016; Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Van Kerckem, 2014). Interview settings are in themselves interesting research sites for the construction of meaning and identity, as the speaker presents versions of themself in that moment to the researcher (Bucholtz, 2010). An interview therefore enables us to see which cultural repertoires respondents for instance draw upon during the conversation, and how they actively, in interaction with the researcher, explain their experiences and negotiate their identities and belongings.

One limitation of using in-depth interviews, and not for instance observations, is that I mostly have access to discursive data on how students discuss their social interactions, rather than seeing it in their day-to-day lives. As Wimmer (2013) discusses, within boundary processes, a distinction can be drawn between categorical and behavioural dimensions. Categorical dimensions refer to how divisions between 'us' and 'them' can be constructed, while behavioural dimensions refer to scripts of actions that shape how individuals relate to in- and out-groups, and thus how they truly act upon social categorizations. With observations, it is possible to analyse everyday networks of relationships, in which individuals connect and distance themselves from others, which are harder to grasp in an interview setting. However, as I selected respondents from only two schools, I was able to interview students from the same classes and friendship groups, and in that way to grasp their networks and how they felt similar to certain groups and distanced themselves from others. Students would talk about a specific situation that happened in their class, for instance, and I could discuss that situation with other students as well, to understand how they all interacted with each other in that moment. Interestingly, the interview setting also allowed them to reflect on their actions, for instance explaining why they acted like that, how they ideally would want to act and discussing their feelings towards those actions and experiences. Indeed, interviews can reveal emotional

dimensions of social experiences and allow us to capture meanings that are not visible when observing behaviour in everyday life. An interview empowers the researcher to question and probe imagined meanings of activities, the individual's self-concepts and sense of self-worth, ideal responses or situations, their fantasies about themselves and others, and so on (Lamont & Swidler, 2014).

In our conversations, I first asked about my respondents' free time, their reflections on their school career and their future ambitions, and generally aimed for a rich description of their everyday life. Relations and interactions with their teachers were discussed if they brought this issue up themselves, otherwise they were discussed a bit later in the interview. Second, we discussed their religious and non-religious experiences and identifications, what religion means to them in their life, what it means to be 'a good Muslim' or 'a good Christian', and their relations with their family and parents. After that, I would present them with paper cards on which they could fill in various identities important to them, structured in a circle (with themselves in the centre – I used a tangerine for this). This enabled us to delve deeper into their multiple identity constructions and the meanings they give to collective social identities. Where do they feel they belong, whom do they identify with and how do they think that others perceive them? With the latter question, dissonance between how they feel and how they feel others perceive them could emerge, as well as experiences of bridging, and from there we could discuss boundary processes. In addition, I would ask about their friendship groups, and who they feel most comfortable hanging with and why; also here, constructions of boundaries emerged and negotiating strategies were discussed. Lastly, using vignettes (Hughes & Huby, 2004), we discussed relations with their teachers, how they feel at school, situations where they felt stigmatized and discriminated against and how they reworked 'Othering' by their teachers.

During my fieldwork, I slightly adapted the questions of the semi-structured interviews. Additional questions emerged through a cyclical process of data collection and analysis, and some questions turned out not to work for my respondents. For instance, I used questions from Lamont et al (2002) and Lamont et al (2016) to understand how students give meaning to moral symbolic boundaries: *'How do you feel similar or different from others?', 'Who do you admire?', 'Who do you despise?', 'Who do you feel inferior or superior to?'*. When putting these questions to my respondents, they turned out to be too vague and general, but also too triggering or sensitive. Most respondents would answer *'Oh no, I am not like that, I don't see myself as better than anyone else',* as they wished to present themselves to the researcher as *'open minded'* or *'not discriminating'*. Therefore, I adapted the formulation of the questions,

to *'Who do you like to hang out with?', 'Who do you feel more comfortable with?', 'Do you feel you avoid other/certain people?'*, and probed why they would rather hang out with group x than with group y. The final questions in my semi-structured interviews are included in appendix II (in Dutch).

Analysis: abductive-interpretivist approach

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, as well as taking a naturalistic approach (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005; Widodo, 2014), which incorporates nonverbal cues such as silences, body language, pauses and grammatical errors, unfinished sentences, sounds (*'mmmh' 'pfff'*), and emotional expressions such as laughter, stuttering and crying (in line with Kostet, 2022). Half of the interviews were transcribed by myself, the other half were transcribed by two students, who were both given clear guidelines on how to transcribe the interviews, and had to sign a confidentiality agreement.

I analysed my interviews in a cyclical and iterative process. The data collection and analysis did not follow a linear research process, but rather were alternated with each other in a dialectic way. For instance, I started with four interviews, transcribed them, coded and analysed them. Subsequently, I reflected on my methods, made adjustments and already identified some important themes and questions that I should explore in more depth. Thereafter, I would again conduct some interviews and repeat this cycle of analysis.

I mostly followed an abductive-interpretivist approach (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). An abductive approach starts from empirical data, rather than from theory, but does not deny the role of prior theoretical knowledge; which provides a background when analysing the data (Conaty, 2021). Unlike inductive analysis, it emphasizes that rather than setting aside all preconceived theoretical ideas during a research process, researchers should *'enter the field with the deepest and broadest theoretical basic possible and develop their theoretical repertoires throughout the research process'* (Timmerman & Tavory, 2012). It could even be argued that it is a misconception that a researcher can approach data with a 'blank slate' or 'tabula rasa' (Urquhart & Fernández, 2016). Researchers have their own personal viewpoints and experiences, relate and interact with the data themselves, and carry their theoretical knowledge. Indeed, my theoretical insights did guide the questions I asked, and the insights and findings that emerged from the data were captured and understood within my broader, pre-defined theoretical framework of boundary work. For instance, when analysing my data, I could already recognize, because of my theoretical knowledge on boundary strategies, that my

Muslim respondents were negotiating their religious identity by inversing stigma and destigmatizing their social position. However, an emerging repertoire for doing this, one which I was not yet familiar with, was a repertoire on an 'Islam of the Heart'. I therefore had to turn to the literature again to better understand this emerging theme in my data (e.g. Ryan, 2014). Thus, with this abductive approach, empirical data and existing theoretical knowledge can interplay, interact and amplify each other. As Kostet beautifully puts it (2022): *'I did not go into the field without theoretical knowledge, nor did I let theoretical literature determine my interviews.'*

When analysing my interviews, I would become familiar with the data by reading though the interviews several times. After that, I created open codes (using NVivo), naming and categorizing the data while staying close to the language and descriptions of my respondents: for instance *'not drinking is weird', 'cool', 'my identity is special', 'tatta',* etc. After that, through axial coding, I organized the open codes into categories and made connections and links between them, for instance 'destigmatization', 'experiences of stigma', 'inversion of stigma', 'cosmopolitan attitudes', etc. to gain an overview of how respondents drew symbolic boundaries and used specific cultural repertoires to negotiate and rework them. As discussed before, I would then again collect more data, repeat this analysis until my findings were grounded in the data. Throughout the process I repeatedly reread interviews without the coding.

Reflexivity and researcher positionality

It is important to acknowledge that the researcher is not invisible, neutral or objective in the research process. Therefore, scholars emphasize a reflexive and critical approach, in which the researcher recognizes how their actions, understandings and positions influence the settings and findings of their study (Pearce, 2012; May & Perry, 2014). In addition, interactions between the researcher and respondents may be thought of as construction sites, in which similarities and differences in their social positions and identities are presented, negotiated and reworked on both sides (Beaman, 2017). Therefore, the positionality and identities of the researcher equally shape how participants interact with them, and thus how the researcher interprets the findings. This is not a limitation on research, but rather as Beaman (2017, p.111) states:

> *'I believe that qualitative researchers should not fear the implications of their identities and social locations for the research process, including their relationships with the*

'researched'. Rather, we should embrace them as integral to understanding the totality of individuals' lives.'

I will reflect on how my age, social class, gender and ethnicity impact my interactions with my respondents, and how various socially unequal power relations are present between myself and my respondents depending on the social position of the interviewees. In general, I dealt with my positionality by being transparent towards my respondents, stating that I do not see myself as 'neutral' and that I have my own opinions, viewpoints, experiences, etc. I am here, I said, to listen to their opinions and experiences, without expressing any judgements or imposing my understandings, and that I am honestly interested in their take on matters. Some respondents asked my opinion on certain topics during the interview, and I would give them after the interview was over. I felt that it was fair – and even important – to do so, as it established us as conversation partners, rather than participants in a distant one-way interview between interviewer and interviewee.

To build report between my respondents and myself, I used the strategy of 'self-disclosure', in which the interviewer shares something about themself in order to construct similarity between the interviewer and respondent, so that the latter can feel more comfortable (Abell, Locke, Condor, Gibson & Stevenson, 2006). I could mostly emphasize similarities through my age and young appearance. At the time of my data collection I was 25 years old, but at that time (and sadly, still), I was perceived as approximately 18 years old. Teachers, during my quantitative and qualitative data collection, often mistook me for a student attending the school. This was however a great advantage in building rapport with my respondents. I could easily present myself as a researcher unaffiliated with the school (which I of course also was) and construct 'the teacher' as 'the other', which helped respondents to open up about their experiences with their teachers (such as instances in which they felt discriminated against). In addition, as I was still young myself, I talked with my respondents about clothing, styles, music, social media, etc. in informal conversations, and in that sense created similar understandings. This also helped to deconstruct a hierarchical relation between us, based on me being a researcher. Students often saw me as a student as well and wished me, for example, *'good luck with school'* (although I really was transparent about being a researcher, and not a student). As I was also brought up in Antwerp, I am familiar with the dialect and words used by my respondents, and thus connected over typical cultural elements of also being from Antwerp.

Second, as a female researcher, my gender also played a role in our conversations. In their self-presentation to me, boys with a migration background, and particularly Muslim boys, clearly felt the need to emphasize that they are feminists, by saying *'first and foremost, you need to know that I am a feminist'*, and of course I would probe why they felt the need to tell me this in the first place. Clearly, in the interaction between us there is an intersection between me being female and white, and them being Muslim and male, a group which is often stigmatized as having oppressive ideas towards women. Therefore, they felt the need to rework the image that I could have of them and to deny potential prejudices or stereotypes, as is clear in the following quote from one of my respondents:

> *'You often hear 'women are oppressed by their men because they have to wear a headscarf', but that is really not the case.* ***Maybe that's hard for you to understand****, but men and women are equal in our religion.'*

My outsider status in that sense was interesting, as I could see how they participated in boundary work through their interaction with me. I felt that female respondents were more at ease to talk about taboo subjects, such as going out, drinking, kissing, as these felt like 'woman to woman' conversations, in which you have a mutual understanding of navigating the world as female.

As a white researcher, my identity as part of the dominant ethnic majority group was often pointed out by my respondents. For instance, due to my position I was often perceived as non-religious: one respondent, when giving his opinions about non-religion, started his thoughts with *'No offense, but…'*. By being perceived as non-religious, I noticed that students were willing to talk about some sensitive topics related to religious practices and norms, such as *'I actually don't pray, but nobody knows this'*, as they might be less worried about being judged by me on this issue. In addition, my position also had an effect on the identification processes of my respondents. For instance, when I asked one of my respondents (who migrated from Romania) what identifications are important to him, he said he identified as Belgian, but stopped himself and asked *'I'm not sure if I am able to say that, do you think I am Belgian?'*, asking my approval for his belonging to this group. Muslim respondents often started the interview by discussing common prejudices about Islam, and wanted to first and foremost make it clear to the researcher that these are wrong and often misrepresented in the media, and to discuss what it truly means to be Muslim. I asked one of my respondents why he felt the need to emphasize this at the beginning of the conversation, and he stated that it was of importance

to say this first (so as to start the conversation 'with a clean slate'), but that it also annoys him that this is actually needed. Due to my outsider position, students felt the need to educate me on these matters. I do think that respondents would rather not discuss certain matters with me, to avoid confirming generalized ideas and prejudices about their ethnic or religious communities. However, many respondents did express in-group critique, partly also in their self-presentation towards me as 'reflexive' 'critical' and 'autonomous' thinkers (this could again come from reworking a possible prejudiced image of them as religious, which is often perceived as 'uncritical'). In general, it is clear that identity and boundary processes were also at play in our interactions.

I tried to build a rapport with my respondents and to be attentive to these unequal power relations by establishing a safe(r) space, and acknowledging their experiences of stigma and discrimination. I did this by making it clear in verbal or nonverbal ways that I am aware of dominant racist discourses in Belgium. I used expressions such as *'I hear what you are saying'* and when they talked about experiences of discrimination, I reassured them by saying *'that is really not ok that this happened'*. After the interviews I received feedback from my respondents that gave me the feeling I was handling the conversations well and succeeded in creating a safe(r) space. Many respondents told me they enjoyed the conversation and that it felt like a relief to finally get the time to truly express their points of view.

I noticed that my respondents who are also part of the dominant ethnic majority group, often wanted to present themselves firstly as 'open-minded', and as non-racist. However, during the conversations they would start to feel more comfortable expressing racist remarks, or voicing discourses on identity threat and reverse racism, with the expectation that I would understand where they were coming from. Often I had to ask these respondents more probing questions, as they often took for granted that I knew what they were talking about (*'you know what I mean')*.

Lastly, I also wish to reflect on my experiences in academia as a white and female researcher. There is scarce research on the academic field in Flanders; the work of Dounia Bourabain (2021) on sexism and racism in the 'ivory tower' is ground-breaking, as there has been little research before on these systems in our own work context. Kostet (2023) also argues that working-class academics, as well as those with a minority ethnic background, are exceptionally underrepresented in Flemish academia. In her article contributing to the literature on researcher positionality and power dynamics, she argues that methodological reflections are often

discussed from the perspective of white, middle-class researchers. It is clear that there is an urgent need within research for a variety of lived experiences and positions among researchers, in various topics and academic fields (not only in fields of sociology on topics such as gender, ethnic diversity, race, etc.). However, the academic field does not provide a safe space for these various perspectives.

In my personal experience, being a woman in academia has been a great struggle, as it remains a male-dominated field. Luckily, I could find support and comfort with my female colleagues, and we could find a sense of safe space with each other. In addition, it was shocking to see that racism remains highly structured and institutionalized within academia, as observed in countless discussions about identity, race, etc. on an individual level with fellow researchers working on these topics (in which, for instance, one saw no problem in using the n-word), and in institutional decisions taken by the university. Recently, for instance, the university suspended two faculty members for a couple of months as they were caught on tape using racist remarks about students of Moroccan descent. It was striking that the university did not use the term 'racism' in their communication about the event, and even sent out an e-mail with stricter rules on recordings to avoid such 'outings' in the future: they were concerned about being exposed rather than solving the bigger problem at hand. A petition was signed by +- 800 staff members claiming that this was not a racist issue. This is just one of many examples of an unsafe environment that is present and in which students and staff feel excluded, targeted and unwelcome. While researching young people's identity and discrimination, it felt weird to me to work in a context in which these structures are also highly present, and where researchers working on diversity also contributed to these systems. As a white researcher, it therefore felt problematic to work on these topics, while our own work context contributes to the inequalities we study. As a sociologist, I wished to change these structures from within, but often felt powerless (definitely also from our positions as PhD students). For instance, my co-worker and I participated in working groups on internal diversity and inclusion policies, but both came out completely disillusioned, as these groups felt rather performative or like window-dressing, and there was no appetite for real change.

Chapter 5

(Sub)national and supranational identity among majority and minority youth in superdiverse urban schools

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with Noel Clycq & Verschraegen

This article studies the extent to which ethnic minority and ethnic majority students in highly diverse urban schools identify with Flemish and European identity. In doing so this paper aims to discuss to what extent these sub-national and supranational identities can function as shared identities within the multiple identity belongings of teenagers and what the impact is of teacher support and perceived discrimination in schools on these phenomena. The analysis is based upon a survey among Belgian 'native' and Moroccan origin students in the 5th and 6th year of secondary education in Antwerp, one of Europe's most diverse cities. The results show that Moroccan students identify more strongly with a European identity than with a Flemish identity, while Flemish 'native' students identify more strongly with Flemish than with European identity. This results in a large 'identity gap' with respect to Flemish identity but a much smaller gap with respect to European identity. In addition, our results show a positive effect of teacher support on Flemish and European identity for Belgian students, while it only has a positive effect on European identity for Moroccan students. The broader implications of the findings are discussed.

Introduction

National identities in Europe often seem less attractive to individuals with an immigration background, while they remain one of the most important identities to national citizens without an immigration background (Alba & Foner, 2015). Recent research showed that in particular Muslim adolescents do not identify strongly with (sub)national identities in regions and countries such as Flanders (and Belgium) and Germany (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). When (sub)national identity remains one of the most important identities for ethnic native Europeans, a gap might be emerging where ethnic minorities and ethnic 'natives' do not share the same collective identity and might not develop shared feelings of belonging together in superdiverse contexts.

[3] Clycq, N., Driezen, A., & Verschraegen, G. (2020). (Sub) national and supranational identity among majority and minority youth in superdiverse urban schools. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *24*(5), 563-579.

Moreover, in Flanders – a context wherein (subnational) Flemish identity is quite salient in political and public debates on education (Clycq, 2016) – already from the age of eleven children with a (predominantly Muslim) Turkish migration background identify significantly less with the Belgian (national) identity than children without an immigration background (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016). Thus, research shows that in superdiverse urban areas across Europe youth can (and does) identify with a variety of collective identities and often constructs multidimensional identities (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). Nevertheless, in particular the (in)compatibility of ethnic 'native'/national identity and ethnic minority identity seems to be a recurrent issue as ethnic minorities generally express a strong attachment to their ethnic minority identity (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016, 2018). This raises the question whether other collective identity/ies – next to ethnic (minority) and national identities – emerge in superdiverse contexts that might be able to be 'equally' attractive, available and appropriated by youth with and without a migration background. To this end, the current paper acknowledges individual's ability and need to construct multidimensions identities and thus also their agency in articulating which identities they feel to be (in)compatible.

First, this article engages with a new approach in research on collective identity in relation to ethno-cultural diversity, which focuses on the role of European identity (next to (sub)national identity). Most research on European identity has studied the perspectives and experiences of so-called 'native' Europeans, even though they are now a minority in several urban areas across Europe (Kaina, Karolewski & Kuhn, 2015). Moreover, a few recent studies show that individuals with a non-European immigration background might identify more strongly with European identity than with the (sub)national identity of the country they are living in (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Teney, Hanquinet & Bürkin, 2016). In this article, we elaborate on these findings and study what might influence these processes. Some argue that feelings of exclusion can push youngsters with an immigration background away from (sub)national identities and towards collective identities such as 'being European' (Erisen, 2017). In addition, others focus on the conceptualization of these identities and argue that (sub)national identities in Europe are inherently 'ethno-cultural' and thus unattractive to 'ethnic others' (Alba & Foner, 2015).

A second major focus of this paper lies in grasping some of the important factors steering identity outcomes. To this end the paper collects data in a context wherein 'identity' is highly salient: the domain of the (sub)national education system. Since their establishment as key institutions in nation-building processes formal education was given as one of its major tasks

to socialize children into becoming 'good' (national) citizens and members of collectivities such as a (sub)national society (Green, 2013). Therefore, it is argued that studying collective identity formation in education is important, as certain identities are made available e.g. through the curriculum and teacher-student interactions, while others are potentially suppressed (Clycq, 2016; Valenzuela, 1999). Two major factors can be studied that can deeply influence identification processes of pupils in schools: (1) feelings of discrimination and exclusion of pupils, and (2) the impact of the relations pupils have with their most significant other in education, their teacher.

In this paper, we elaborate on the issues raised above by studying European and Flemish identity on a sample of 509 Belgian (N = 211) 'native' and Moroccan origin (N =298) students in the 5th and 6th year in 17 secondary education schools. We focus on the context of Flanders, more in particular on Antwerp, one of Europe's most (ethnically) diverse cities. We explore the following research questions: (1)(a) To what extent do Belgian 'native' and Moroccan origin students identify with a Flemish and a European identity? (b) Do Belgian 'native' and Moroccan origin students significantly differ in their Flemish and European identity (2) What is the effect of perceived discrimination at school on the one hand, and the support of teachers on the other hand, on Flemish and European identity for (a) Moroccan origin students and (b) Belgian 'native' students? To answer these questions we conduct a three-step analysis starting with (a) a descriptive analysis of Flemish and European identity for Belgian and Moroccan students, (b) an independent samples *t*-test and paired samples *t*-test with a discussion of the effect sizes and (c) a multilevel linear regression analysis to test the effect of perceived discrimination and teacher support for the subset of Moroccan students and the subset of Belgian students. We use multilevel analysis to control for the clustering of the students in schools. Before presenting and discussing our methodology and results, we discuss the state of the art on collective identity and ethnic diversity in the context of education.

National identity and European identity in superdiverse contexts

A new trend in identity research is the study of collective identity formation in highly diverse contexts. These identity discussions have been building up in recent years, as a rapid ethno-cultural diversification of European societies is turning 'native' ethnic majorities into ethnic minorities themselves (Crul, 2016). Metropolitan areas are quickly transforming into contexts wherein every ethnic group is at the same time a minority group (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters, 2002). In these so-called majority-minority cities (sub)national social imaginations

will most likely change and 'new' collective identities are expected to emerge (Gould & Messina, 2014). This transformation within collective imaginaries may be more drastic in Europe (as compared, for example, to the USA), because (sub)national identities are more often experienced by minorities as rather exclusive, while these identities remain the most important identities for 'native' majorities (Alba & Foner, 2015). Moreover, due to the continuing importance and even resurgence of ethno-nationalist inspired politics and social movements, ethno-cultural diversity is seldom experienced as a core element in the imaginations of European national identities. When (sub)national identities are imagined and practised in exclusionary ways (e.g. by prohibiting the expression of minority and religions in society's institutions) this leads to a situation where minority groups and migrants do not feel included in (sub)national identities (Alba & Foner, 2015). This is indeed what recent research seems to suggest: minorities in general do not identify strongly with the (sub)national identities of the European countries they are living in, mainly in reaction to discrimination or stigmatization (Fleischmann, Phalet & Klein, 2011). In reaction to this ethnic minority individuals might search for more – in their perception – inclusive collective identities, potentially at the local and/or on the supranational level, or they might rely upon their minority identity as a protection strategy to discrimination (Baysu, Phalet & Brown, 2011).

Indeed, some scholars argue that city and/or local identities are uniquely equipped to be sufficiently inclusive for individuals from different immigration backgrounds (Oosterlynck, Verschraegen & van Kempen, 2018). Based upon concrete interactions in tangible contexts individuals might more easily construct bridging relations and collective identities. However, research also shows that in cities with a traditionally strong (extreme) right wing political presence city identity for ethnic minorities can be lower and/or lead to more 'identity conflict', as was apparent for Moroccan and Turkish origin youth in Antwerp (Fleischmann & Phalet 2016; Verkuyten, 2016). Moreover, others argue that for bridging relations to develop the intensity of the relations is an important factor. For example, in the context of leisure time close friendship (strong interethnic ties) seem to be much more important for developing durable bridging relations than weak ties (Kivijärvi, 2015).

A different, and potentially less straightforward route ethnic minorities could take to overcome (perceived) barriers to feel included in the (sub)national (and city) identity, is to identify with a supranational identity, e.g. a European identity. Indeed, some research suggests that ethnic minorities identify more with a European identity than with the (sub)- national identity of the country they are living in (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007).

Even though their European identification is modest – similar to 'native' majority members – their national identification is very low. This is an interesting element, as much of the literature points to the fact that European identity remains appropriated mainly by higher socio-economic status and internationally mobile groups (Fligstein, 2008; Diez Medrano, 2011). At the same time scholars such as Bhambra (2016) argue that European identity cannot be perceived independent from Europe's colonial and violent past, in particular vis a vis countries wherefrom many of Europe's ethnic minorities and recent refugees originated from. This negative connotation of 'Europe' could hinder ethnic minorities to identify with this identity.

Yet, recently research shows that ethnic minorities and migrants become active participants in European identity formation (Teney, Hanquinet & Bürkin, 2016). When the boundaries of national identities are experienced as relatively impermeable, it is to be expected that new strategies will be developed to ameliorate one's group status (Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010; Lamont et al, 2016). This is especially the case when one's low status and the high status of, e.g. the national identity group, is felt as unjust due to experiences of discrimination (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016). Thus, identifying with a European identity that one relates with values such as dignity, equality and freedom (Boehnke & Fuss, 2008; Roose, 2013), might enable marginalized individuals and groups to increase their societal status or sense of being an authentic member of a society.

Based upon the above discussion of the current state of the art and related to our first research question presented at the end of the introduction, we formulate the following hypotheses for our study:

> H1a. Belgian 'native' students will identify to a higher extent with Flemish and European identity than Moroccan origin students.
>
> H1b. Belgian 'native' students will identify more as Flemish than European, while Moroccan origin students will identify more as European than Flemish.

Studying collective identity formation in education

Educational systems and schools in particular are interesting settings to study processes of collective identity formation. In nation-building processes (sub)national education systems are often core institutions and one of the main reasons they are set up is to shape the identity formation of youth, through the school curricula, the language used and the everyday classroom interactions (Green, 2013; Reay, 2010). More in particular it is one of their major tasks to

socialize children into becoming (sub)national citizens and thus include them in a shared sense of belonging together and collective identity (Youdell, 2011). However, at the same time when discussing the 'performance quality' of education systems students are often categorized based upon specific ethno-cultural identity features (Schleicher, 2018). Sometimes migration status is used to separate and compare the performance of 'native' students versus 'migrant' students. At other times ethnicity or religion and, very often, language are used to differentiate between first and second language learners (Alba & Holdaway, 2013). While categorizing students (e.g. also according to gender or socio-economic status) is a common policy and research strategy, it also illustrates how important identity features can become in predicting or sometimes even explaining educational inequalities. Moreover, categorization is seldom a neutral process and the creation of the label of 'at risk' students can lead to stigmatization and consequently have an impact on identification and acculturation processes of students (Makarova & Birman, 2016). This also broadens the focus not only to formal categorization processes but also to the interactions within schools and in classroom in particular. Within schools and classrooms teachers are the most significant others that – in the eyes of students – represent the inclusive or exclusive character of a school towards the identities of students. Research showed that negative student-teacher relations can negatively impact students' identification with the school (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). Therefore, in this paper, we focus on two crucial related issues: the role of perceived discrimination (and related issues) in school and the influence of feeling supported by teachers.

The impact of perceived discrimination in school

As young people spend huge amounts of time in schools, their experiences are bound to go broader than just the acquisition and internalization of knowledge and skills (Feliciano, 2009). Their social and psychological well-being is also influenced by their experiences and relations in schools (Juvonen, 2006). Compared to 'native' students research shows that ethnic minorities more often feel stigmatized and sometimes even discriminated by teachers (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016; Van Praag, Stevens & Van Houtte, 2016). Students' cultural resources, e.g. their 'home language', religion or other identity features are frequently pinpointed as the main causes for educational failure (Valenzuela, 1999;Yosso, 2005). Research even shows that these processes can be aggregated into a specific school culture in such a way that teachers have generally lower teachability perceptions of ethnic minority (and lower SES) students (Ağirdağ, Van Houtte & Van Avermaet, 2012; Van Houtte, 2004). One explanation of these perceptions that investment of time and effort in 'vulnerable' students not necessarily 'pays off' in higher

achievement is ethnic prejudice. However, this relation is not straightforward. Ethnic prejudice and discrimination by teachers depends on various personal as well as contextual variables, e.g. school composition (Vervaet et al, 2016), but 'culturalist' approaches often play a key role (Alba & Holdaway, 2013). Those students feeling stigmatized by teachers based on their ethnic, religious, cultural and/or linguistic identity, can disidentify more from their school. This negatively affects their identification with the broader social imagination of the school (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). This also seems to impact their broader collective identification. Verkuyten (2016) found evidence that perceived discrimination could lead adults with an immigration background to disidentify with national identity in The Netherlands and identify more strongly with their ethnic minority identity. Similar results were found by Fleischmann & Phalet (2016) and Baysu, Phalet & Brown (2011) in Flanders. Moreover, recent research in Germany studying the longitudinal measurement of the relation between perceived discrimination and identification showed that when ethnic minorities perceived more discrimination mainly their national (German) identification lowered over time (Fleischmann, Leszczensky & Pink 2019). While there is some impact of actual and perceived discrimination on (sub)national and ethnic minority identity, up until now studies analysing its impact on (supranational) European identity have been missing. We therefore argue that the perception of discrimination by teachers (which are almost all of Flemish native European background) might also have a negative impact on minorities' European identity.

As the aforementioned studies found that there is a strong correlation between reports on actual and perceived discrimination and that the latter – perception of discrimination on the group level – wields more reports than reports on actual discrimination, the current paper applies this measurement of discrimination (Baysu, Phalet & Brown, 2011). Moreover, a focus on perceived discrimination by teachers also allows for a more fine-grained and open measurement of discrimination because it is also a relevant question for ethnic native majority students and might influence the extent to which they identify. Thus, based upon these findings we formulate the following hypotheses with respect to our study:

> H2a. Perceived discrimination will have a negative effect on Flemish as well as European identity for Moroccan origin students, but perceived discrimination will have no effect on the identity of Belgian 'native' students.

The role of feeling supported by teachers

One can also study the impact of school processes from the opposite perspective: feeling supported and respected by teachers might also have an impact on identity formation. As Erisen (2017) argues, based upon macro-level data, well-functioning antidiscrimination policies correlate with migrants feeling recognized as part of and included in the national imagination, rather than the European imagination and identity. The question arises if similar processes can be found on the meso- and micro-level of school interactions. It is common knowledge that the teacher–pupil relationship is assumed to be one of the most influential in the school context. For instance, it has a major impact on students' school engagement, their performance, but also more generally on their social integration in and identification with the school (Klem & Connell, 2004; Goodenow, 1993; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). The impact of teachers is also apparent on the students' psychological and social well-being (Juvonen, 2006; Cemalcilar, 2010; Berti, Molinari & Speltini, 2010). This may be related to the fact that teachers, who are experienced by students as positively supporting them, empower, in particular, low-status pupils to contest stereotypes (Lamont et al, 2016). Support for this claim is found in the qualitative research of Faas (2016) with Turkish origin students in German schools, which demonstrates that European identity thrives in multicultural and inclusive school contexts. Based upon these findings we formulate the following hypotheses with respect to our study:

> H2b. Feeling supported by teachers (higher teacher support) will have a positive effect on the Flemish and the European identity of Moroccan origin as well as Belgian 'native' students.

Method

Description of the field: the Flemish educational system

Flemish secondary education can be characterized as a clear example of a system with early tracking (from the age of 12 to 13 years old) wherein the three main tracks – general, technical and vocational education – are embedded in a strong hierarchical framework. A common finding in such systems is that vocational training is often viewed as a reservoir of students (often working class and/or ethnic minority) incapable or not intelligent enough for the higher status tracks (Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010). It is also no surprise that strong performance inequalities, mainly related to the socio-economic status and migration background of students, exist and persist over time in Flemish education (Danhier et al., 2014). This finding sits uneasily with the imagination of a meritocratic educational system wherein only students' efforts and

intelligence is said to be determinative for their results (Clycq, Timmerman, Van Avermaet, Wets & Hermans, 2014). A final important element to consider for the current paper is that the vast majority of teachers in Flemish education – around 95% – has a 'native' Flemish-Belgian background (Consuegra, Vantieghem, Halimi & Van Houtte, 2016). This can create clear and explicit ethnic boundaries between the staff in front of the class and the pupils in the class, in particular in cities such as Antwerp where almost 70% of the youngsters have an immigration background (Lens et al, 2015). These characteristics make the context of Flemish education highly relevant to study identity, in particular when taking into account migration background or 'ethnic identity'.

Sample

The study was conducted over 8 weeks, in February and March 2017. We used data from 509 pupils in the 5th and 6th year of secondary education from 17 high schools in Antwerp, Belgium. Eighty-six schools in the city of Antwerp were asked to participate; this yielded a positive response of 20 percent. The participating schools varied according to neighbourhood, ethnic composition (heterogeneous and homogeneous), educational track (academic track, vocational track and technical track[4]) and educational network (five belonged to the State network, eleven to the Catholic network and two to the City network).

While 1039 pupils were surveyed, we only used the data of Belgian native students (n =211) and Moroccan origin students (n = 298). Pupils were categorized as 'native Belgians' when they were born in Belgium as well as both their parents and grandmothers, a common way of measuring 'ethnicity' in Flanders. They were categorized as 'Moroccan' according to the following three conditions: If they were born in Morocco, if one or both of their parents were born in Morocco or if both grandmothers were born in Morocco. Several studies show that differences between generations are, strikingly this may be, are rather small in Flanders and that ethnic minority identity remains to some extent salient for 'third generation' children (Clycq et al, 2014; Kostet et al, 2020). In our sample of Moroccan origin students, the vast majority of respondents – that is 84.8% – is categorized as second generation (13.5% belonged to the 1st generation and 1.7% to the 3rd generation of immigration).

[4] ASO, BSO and TSO.

Students filled out the questionnaire in class, with one or two researchers present. The questionnaire was administered in Dutch and took approximately 40 minutes.

Research design

First, we examined the extent to which Moroccan origin and Belgian 'native' students identify with European and Flemish identity. We discussed the descriptive results and compared the mean levels of Flemish and European identity between both groups. Therefore, we conducted an independent sample *t*-test and discussed the effect sizes (Cohen's *d*). In addition, we examined the mean levels of Flemish and European identity within both groups. We conducted a paired sample *t*-test and discussed the effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) (using SPSS statistics 24). This design is in line with the research of Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte (2016).

Second, we continued the analysis by studying the effects of teacher support and perceived discrimination on European and Flemish identity for the subsets of Moroccan origin students and Belgian 'native' students. For this, we conducted a multilevel regression analysis as the data consists of a clustered sample of students nested within schools (using MLwiN, two level procedure). An unconditional model was estimated to determine the amount of variance that occurs on the school level for European and Flemish identity for Moroccan students and for Belgian students. The analysis showed that for the Moroccan subset there is (only) 3.3% of the variance situated on the school level for European identity and 1.4% for Flemish identity. For the Belgian subset, there is (only) 7.2% of variance situated on the school level for European identity, and 7.2% for the Flemish identity as well. Accordingly, research indicates that most of the variation occurs within schools and between pupils (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2002). However, we do belief it is important to rapport a multilevel analysis to account for the nested structure of the data. Subsequently, we added the main (teacher support and perceived discrimination) and control (gender, educational level of the parents and educational track) effects and estimated a random intercept model to explore the individual-level variables. The metric predictors are grand mean centred and unstandardized effects are reported in the tables. Tests to see if the data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern for all the models.

Variables

Dependents

To measure *European and Flemish identity* subjects had to indicate to what extent they identified as European and Flemish on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = very strongly[5] (following Baysu, Phalet & Brown, 2011; Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007). Participants did not rank these identities, but gave a score on each identity. This measure was chosen considering it examines in a straightforward manner the way in which respondents appropriate these identities (Maxwell & Bleich, 2014).

Independents

With respect to the variable of discrimination, we faced a few obstacles. On the questions that probed into the personal experiences of discrimination by teachers, too few students answered these questions to make a meaningful analysis (we come back to this issue in the discussion). Therefore, we shifted our attention to a related, yet more general issue on which we collected sufficient data. Responding on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), based on the school diversity inventory (Gottfredson & Jones, 2001), Belgian and Moroccan origin pupils were both able to answer the following questions referring to *the perceived discrimination of ethno-religious groups in school*: 'Most teachers favour students of their own ethnic or religious group', 'Students are discriminated by some teachers, because of their ethnicity or religion', 'Most teachers consider members of other ethnic groups, unfairly, as troublemakers' and 'Not everyone is treated equally at school'. The scale acquired an adequate Cronbach alpha of 0.78.

Teacher support was measured with three items: 'I feel that I can trust my teachers to talk about my private issues', 'If I talk to my teachers, I think they will try to understand how I feel' and 'If I'm having trouble with my schoolwork, I can go to my teachers for help'. The subjects responded on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (based on Kaye, D'Angelo, Ryan & Lőrin, 2017). This scale delivered an adequate Cronbach alpha of 0.73.

[5] We would like to know how you describe yourself. Do you feel Belgian, a citizen of Antwerp, Christian, Moroccan, etc.? Indicate, with a mark, how strong you identify with the following groups.

Controls

Gender was used as a dichotomous variable: 0 = 'female' and 1 = 'male'. For Belgians there are 140 females and 70 males. For Moroccans there are 180 females and 116 males. Due to an overrepresentation of females for the Belgian sample, we acknowledge less representative results, for this group, regarding to gender. The *educational level* of the parents consisted of five categories: 'Lower education', 'middle education', 'higher education' and 'other'. The reference category was 'lower education'. *The educational track* of the pupils was divided in three groups: 'Academic' (ASO), 'vocational' (BSO) and 'technical' (TSO) education. 'ASO' was selected as the reference category.

Results

The extent of European and Flemish identity for Belgian and Moroccan students

The mean levels on European and Flemish identity for both groups (Table 1) suggest that Belgian students have a higher level of European (M = 3.77; SD = 0.89) and Flemish identity (M = 4.06; SD= 0.95) than Moroccan students (M = 3.44; SD = 1.09) (M = 2.9; SD = 1.16). Further, the independent sample t-test indicates that the difference between Belgian and Moroccan students is statistically significant for Flemish identity (diff = 1.156; t = 11.784; p < 0.001). The Cohen's d (= 1.08) indicates that this is a large difference. The difference for European identity is significant as well (diff = 0.335; t = 3.609; p < 0.001). In contrast, the Cohen's d is 0.33 and, thus, shows a rather small effect size.

The paired sample t-test indicates that Belgian students significantly score higher on the Flemish identity, than the European identity (diff = 0.291; t = −3.828; p < 0.001). The effect size is rather small (Cohen's d = 0.31). Contrastingly, Moroccan students significantly identify more as European, than Flemish (diff = 0,552; t = 7,722, p < 0,001), with a medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.49). Thus, it can be argued that for both groups the European identity has more potential as a collective identity, than the Flemish identity.

Looking at the correlations between European and Flemish identity, there is a significant correlation for both groups. Both are medium in effect size, while the correlation is slightly stronger for the Moroccan students (r = 0.429) than for the Belgian students (r =0.302). This indicates that the Flemish identity becomes stronger when the European identity is stronger and visa-versa.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables for Moroccan (n = 298) and Belgian (n = 211) students: frequencies (%), means and standard variations.

	Moroccan (n=298)		**Belgian (n=211)**	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Independents				
European identity	3,44 (n=283)	1,091	3,77 (n=207)	0,899
Flemish identity	2,9 (n=285)	1,162	4,06 (n=209)	0,949
Main				
Perceived discrimination	2,94 (n=289)	0,86	2,34 (n=210)	0,733
Teacher support	3,21 (n=292)	0,839	3,59 (n=210)	0,68
Controls				
% Gender	(n=296)	0,489	(n=210)	0,473
Female	60,8%		66,7%	
Male	39,2%		33,3%	
% Educational track	(n=297)	0,791	(n=211)	0,645
ASO	36,4%		41,2%	
TSO	36,7%		48,8%	
BSO	26,9%		10%	
% Educational level mother	(n=297)	1.092	(n=210)	0.847
Low	53,9%		11,9%	
Middle	22,2%		27,6%	
High	9,4%		48,6%	
Other	14.5%		11,9%	
% Educational level father	(n=290)	1,228	(n=208)	0.870
Low	37,6%		10,6%	
Middle	22,4%		28,8%	
High	12,8%		44,7%	
Other	27.2%		15,9%	

The effects of perceived discrimination and teacher support on Flemish and European identity for Moroccan and Belgian students

Table 2 shows the effects of perceived discrimination at school and teacher support on European and Flemish identity for the subsets of Moroccan and Belgian students. Moroccan students tend to have a higher level of European identity when they experience more support from their teacher (b = 0.193; $p < 0.05$). This significant effect is not found for the Flemish identity. Regarding the effect of perceived discrimination at school, there is no significant effect for Moroccan students on their Flemish and European identity. The control effects indicate that Moroccan boys significantly identify less as European than Moroccan girls (b = −0.435; $p <$ 0.01). There is no difference for Flemish identity. In addition, having a mother with a middle educational level suggests a higher level of Flemish identity for Moroccan students, than having a mother with a low educational level (b = 0.416; $p < 0.05$). For European identity, there

is no significant difference concerning the educational level of the parents. For both identities, there is no difference for being in a TSO or BSO educational track in comparison to Moroccan students in an ASO track.

The results for the Belgian students suggest that there is a significant effect of teacher support on their Flemish identity ($b = 0.304$; $p < 0.01$) ánd European identity ($b = 0.297$; $p < 0.01$). Regarding the effect of perceived discrimination at school, there is no significant effect for Belgian students on their Flemish and European identity. The control effects suggest that Belgian boys tend to have a significant higher level of European identity than Belgian girls ($b = 0.405$; $p < 0.01$). There is no significant difference for gender concerning their Flemish identity. For both identities, there are no differences for Belgian students concerning their educational track and the educational level of their parents.

With respect to the hypotheses we formulated our study shows mixed results. To start with hypotheses H1a and H1b can be accepted. However, hypotheses H2a and H2b need more discussion as the results for Moroccan origin students are more complex. Contrary to what we expected in H2a, perceived discrimination does not have a negative effect on Flemish nor on European identity for Moroccan origin students. Moreover, H2b can only be partly accepted for Moroccan origin students: feeling supported by teachers (higher teacher support) has a positive effect on their European identity but not on their Flemish identity. We discuss this further below.

Table 2. Multilevel regression on European and Flemish identity for Moroccan students (n = 298) and Belgian students (n = 211): Unstandardized effects (b), standard errors (SEs), p values and model parameters.

		Moroccan students (n=298)				**Belgian students (n=211)**			
		European identity		Flemish identity		European identity		Flemish identity	
		b	(SE)	*b*	(SE)	*b*	(SE)	*b*	(SE)
Main	Perceived discrimination	0.021	0.079	-0.022	0.086	0.124	0.089	0.173	0.095
	Teacher support	0.193*	0.082	0.168	0.09	0.297**	0.093	0.304**	0.100
Controls	Gender (female)	-0.435**	0.139	0.055	0.151	0.405**	0.132	0.080	0.140
	Educational track (ASO)								
	TSO	0,103	0,155	0.023	0.166	-0.074	0.151	0.019	0.159
	BSO	0,357	0,186	0.287	0.198	-0.053	0.254	0.344	0.270
	Educational level mother (low)								
	Middle	-0.135	0.170	0.416*	0.186	-0.248	0.202	-0.052	0.217
	High	0.154	0.238	0.152	0.260	-0.110	0.207	0.148	0.221
	Other	-0.059	0.216	0.047	0.236	-0.065	0.259	0.233	0.279
	Educational level father (low)								
	Middle	0.227	0.173	0.117	0.190	-0.180	0.215	-0.246	0.228
	High	0.138	0.218	-0.071	0.238	-0.024	0.229	-0.379	0.240
	Other	0.064	0.181	0.014	0.196	-0.107	0.263	-0.233	0.279
Model parameters	Unconditional model								
	Constant		3.440		2.911		3.796		4.086
	Within school variance σ^2		1.144		1.324		0.753		0.831
	Error term		0.099		0.144		0.076		0.084
	Log likelihood		848.469		892.589		538.532		564.158
	N		283		285		207		209
	Main model								
	Constant		3.411		2.671		3.870		4.203
	Within school variance σ^2		1.057		1.268		0.669		0.776
	Error term		0.094		0.11		0.069		0.079
	% variance explained (level 1)		7.6%		4.2%		11.1%		6.6%
	Log likelihood		768.042		815.007		500.997		535.041
	N		265		265		202		204

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

In this paper, we addressed new emerging issues in the sociology of education and identity. Our key research question was: to what extent do ethnic majority and ethnic minority students identify with a Flemish and a European identity, and what is the impact of teacher support and perceived discrimination thereon.

First, we aimed to study the extent of Flemish and European identity for Moroccan origin and Belgian 'native' students. The results show that Belgian 'native' students identify more with European and Flemish identities in comparison to Moroccan origin students. However, the effect size for Flemish identity is quite large, while the effect size for European identity is rather low. In addition, and equally interesting, Moroccan origin students significantly identify more as European, than as Flemish. Because of this rather small effect size of the difference on European identity between both groups and the significant higher level of European identity for Moroccan students, the results suggest that Belgian 'native' and Moroccan origin resemble each other more closely in terms of their European identity, than their Flemish identity (in line with Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016). At the same time the results show that the Flemish and European identity are positively correlated and are therefore not mutually exclusive. This is in line with most research arguing that, firstly, membership in a group is often highly correlated with membership in other groups (Maxwell & Bleich, 2014). Secondly, studies also showed that (sub)national and supranational identities are not necessarily in contradiction or conflict with each other (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Diez Medrano, 2003; Reeskens & Wright, 2014). This demonstrates the multi-layered character of identity underlining that collective identities are often not exclusive towards each other.

The finding that ethnic majority and minority youth identifies more or less equally strong with European identity – while the 'identity gap' is much bigger with respect to (sub)national identity – was also found in a few other studies (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Teney, Hanquinet & Bürkin, 2016), we aimed to further develop our understanding by studying these phenomena in schools. As young people spend a lot of their time in schools, the latter have always been presented as crucial socialization agents in the development of collective identities (Green, 2013). Taking this into account we examined the effect of perceived discrimination and teacher support on European identity and Flemish identity for 'native' Belgian and Moroccan origin students. Contrary to what we expected we did not find support that perceptions of discrimination in school significantly influence the extent to which respondents

identify as European or Flemish. The question is why feelings of discrimination have no significant effect for Moroccan origin students despite various studies showing the Flemish educational system being quite stigmatizing, specifically towards Moroccan origin students (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016; Van Praag, Stevens & Van Houtte, 2016). Several hypotheses could be inferred that can be studied in future research. Is it because racism and discrimination is so pervasive that what happens in the school context does not make a significant difference? Do Moroccan origin students in Flanders face a rather invisible institutionalized form of discrimination? Is it because discrimination is indeed not related to processes of identity formation in this specific educational context or, indeed, did these youngsters not perceive discrimination? Or is it because individualist explanations of the lower educational achievements of Moroccan students have been internalized and discrimination is to some extent tabooed as an explanation for differences in educational achievement (Hunt, 2007; Lamont et al, 2016)? Interestingly, our results suggest that for both groups the experience of feeling supported by their teachers positively influences their European identity. This is also the case for the Flemish identity for Belgian students, while this is not the case for the Moroccan students. Indeed, a dominant finding throughout most education research is that a supportive student-teacher relationship is of primordial importance (Klem & Connell, 2004; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). It has a positive impact on students' school belonging, their school engagement and their results (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). What our research shows is that it can also have a significant impact on students' collective identity. However, it is striking that supportive student teacher relations positively affect Flemish identity for Belgian students, but have no effect for Moroccan students. This may point to the 'irrelevance' of Flemish identity for Moroccan students and future research needs to probe deeper into the different factors that can account for this. Overall, this is a striking finding given that (most of) these students have spent all their lives in Flanders and have been enrolled in a Flemish educational system that explicitly stresses 'Flemish identity', and they have been interacting with a teacher force that is 95% Belgian (Flemish) 'native'. Flemish identity is not only salient on the macro-level, e.g. in the public discourses and policies of the Flemish minister of education and other policy makers (see above), but also on the meso-level of the school policy and the micro-level of everyday interaction in the classroom (Clycq et al, 2014). The way Flemish identity is represented in dominant discourse and the way it is perceived is potentially a key factor for many ethnic minority students to not feel attracted to this identity, something future research might probe into.

Our study also looked at the influence of socio-demographic variables on identity. Contrary to the existing literature (Roose, 2013; Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016), we did not find a significant effect for parental education on the European and Flemish identity (except that Moroccans with a middle-educated mother tend to have a stronger Flemish identity than Moroccans with a lower educated mother). This could be explained by a relatively low number of respondents in specific categories, in particular the few Belgian origin students from a lower SES family and the few Moroccan origin students from a higher SES family. Similarly, there was no significant effect for the educational track of the pupils. Consistent with previous studies, this study demonstrated that gender had a significant effect on the European identity and not on the Flemish identity for both groups (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016). Research found that men identify more strongly with the European identity than women (Kohli, 2000). However, our study nuanced this finding. Belgian boys do indeed identify more strongly with the European identity than Belgian girls. Interestingly, for the Moroccan pupils, there is a reverse outcome. Moroccan boys tend to identify more weakly with the European identity than Moroccan girls do. As an analysis of the impact of gender was not our primary aim, future research is imperative to improve our understanding of this intersection between gender and ethnicity within a school context.

Social and policy implications

Our findings encourage us to approach the issue of collective identity in highly diverse contexts from a different perspective. The creation of collective identities is not only part of specific 'civic integration courses' set up by many European countries, but it is also part of everyday school life.

A first implication to consider is that a low (sub)national identification (for example with the Flemish identity) does not indicate a disidentification from broader society leading to an oppositional identity (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Rather it might primarily refer to the 'irrelevance' of Flemish identity for ethnic minority students. Thus, whereas the Flemish subnational identity might be perceived as incompatible with an ethnic minority identity, European supranational identity might not be perceived in the same way. Therefore, we can argue that the European identity might have a higher potential of becoming a collective identity for both groups.

This raises questions on the role of schools and teachers in collective identity formation. It is to be expected that (sub)national identity figures more prominently in school curricula,

especially given the ethnically homogeneous staff and management population in most (Flemish) schools. Yet, at the same time European identity emerges as a more attractive identity for ethnic minority students. Faas (2016) argues that a European identity might flourish in more inclusive school environments, potentially due to more supportive teacher relations. In any case, our findings urge schools and individual teachers to be aware of the impact they have, not only on the knowledge and skills accumulation of students, but also on their collective identity formation.

Finally, and relating to broader society, questions can be asked whether focusing on Flemish identity (or even Belgian identity) is a fruitful policy strategy to make 'newcomers' and ethnic minorities part of the broader national social imagination. Alternatively, should one rather look at newly bottom-up emerging collective identities, such as European identity, and acknowledge the agency of individuals – minorities in particular – in steering collective identity formation processes? These are crucial questions as minority populations are growing fast and outnumber 'native' populations in European cities such as Antwerp, Paris and Rotterdam.

Chapter 6

Religion and everyday cosmopolitanism among religious and non-religious urban youth

Published in *Current Sociology*[6]

With Verschraegen & Clycq

While there is ample research on everyday cosmopolitanism, the relation with religion is less understood. This study examines the difference in everyday cosmopolitanism between Muslim, Christian and non-religious urban youth. Further, it studies the influence of religiosity, religious identification and perceived discrimination on cosmopolitanism. A one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted on data from 1039 students in 17 secondary schools in the superdiverse city of Antwerp. Multilevel regression analysis was conducted on a sample of Muslim (n = 496) and Christian (n = 225) youth. The results indicate no difference between religious and non-religious youth regarding their everyday cosmopolitanism. Moreover, for Muslim youth, intrinsic religiosity is positively associated with cosmopolitan orientations, while religious identification and discrimination negatively effect cosmopolitanism. For Christian youth, religious factors do not explain their cosmopolitan orientations. Overall, the article suggests that scholars and policy makers should discuss the potential of religion to foster cosmopolitan orientations.

Introduction

This article examines the relation between religion and everyday cosmopolitanism among urban diverse youth. Although much of the debate on cosmopolitanism has been theoretical and normative, empirical research has investigated how cosmopolitanism is constructed 'from below' (Keating, 2016; Pichler, 2008; Werbner, 2015). Researchers are increasingly interested in questions concerning which individuals or groups are more likely to have cosmopolitan orientations, mostly understood as a certain openness to cultural difference or diversity (Skrbis & Woodward, 2007).

Much research has examined to what extent such a cosmopolitan openness is predicted by socio-demographic indicators like social class, gender, educational level, residential area, etc. (e.g. Keating, 2016; Olofsson & Öhman, 2007; Pichler, 2009; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Werbner, 1999). Some have briefly touched upon the potential effect of religion on

[6] Driezen, A., Verschraegen, G., & Clycq, N. (2020). Religion and everyday cosmopolitanism among religious and non-religious urban youth. *Current Sociology*, *69*(6), 785-805.

cosmopolitanism (e.g. Woodward, Skrbis & Bean, 2008). In this article, we aim to deepen the understanding of the role of religion by exploring how religious factors can foster or weaken cosmopolitan orientations (see also Roudometof, 2005), in particular in the lives of youth in superdiverse cities.

We aim to achieve this by examining the following questions: (1) Do Muslim, Christian and non-religious urban youth differ in their everyday cosmopolitan orientations? (2) What are the effects of religiosity (religious practices and intrinsic religiosity), religious identification and perceived discrimination of ethnic/religious groups in school on everyday cosmopolitan orientations for Muslim and Christian youth? Our analysis is based on data collected from 1039 students in the 5th and 6th year from 17 secondary education schools in the superdiverse city of Antwerp.

Antwerp is the largest city in the Flemish region in Belgium and displays a high degree of cultural and religious diversity (Oosterlynck et al, 2017). It has citizens from 171 different nationalities, and in recent years the population with a migration background (50.1%) has become numerically larger than the share of 'native' Belgian residents (49.9 %); this makes it a good example of a 'majority-minority city' (Crul, 2016) in which there is no longer a numerical ethnic majority. The share of residents with a migration background is even expected to increase further, as in the group of children aged 10–19, only 29.6% children are considered 'native'. Therefore, youth in Antwerp schools are confronted with religious and cultural differences on a daily basis. More generally, research suggests that young people in urban areas are more likely to report cosmopolitan identities and attitudes, but that there is a lack of in-depth empirical and comparative research (Keating, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2009). The context of Antwerp, then, seems well suited to explore cosmopolitan identities and orientations among urban youth.

First, we clarify our theoretical starting points and discuss what we understand by everyday cosmopolitan orientations. Second, we look into the relationship with religion, particularly Islam and Christianity, and discuss the specific role of religiosity, religious identification and discrimination. Third, we present the methodology and dis- cuss the results. We conclude by discussing our findings and limitations.

Theory and hypotheses

Cosmopolitanism and everyday cosmopolitan orientations

Over the past two decades there has been a broad discussion about the notion of cosmopolitanism across a wide range of disciplines (for an overview, see Delanty, 2012). In the social sciences, cosmopolitanism is mostly understood as a conscious openness to cultural differences, loyalty to human kind and feelings of being a world citizen (Hannerz, 2004; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). It is associated with an increase in supra-national contacts and the emergence of post-national identities, and is often defined in opposition to ethnic or exclusive nationalism (Pichler, 2008). However, the field of cosmopolitanism studies has also received criticism for its too narrow focus on the archetypal, mobile elite that travels the globe easily, thereby reproducing the imagination of cosmopolitanism as an 'elite' identity feature (Calhoun, 2002; Werbner, 1999, 2015). Therefore, for a broader understanding of cosmopolitanism, research needs to widen its lens.

Accordingly, our study focuses on everyday cosmopolitan orientations among diverse youth. We build on research on so-called 'ordinary' or 'everyday' cosmopolitanism in which different scholars set out to examine how cosmopolitan 'openness' – as an everyday disposition – is constituted in quotidian contexts (Pichler, 2009; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Wang, 2018). It concerns a cosmopolitanism 'from below' or a 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', which is less elitist and less Eurocentric (Werbner, 2015). This is in line with Appiah's (2010) argument on 'rooted cosmopolitanism', referring to cosmopolitans as members of morally and emotionally significant communities, and thus as 'rooted' in local allegiances, while embracing notions of tolerance and openness to the world and a shared humanity identity. The notion of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' enables an understanding of everyday cosmopolitanism as embedded in the interactions and negotiations between various belongings, loyalties and multiple identities of individuals in everyday life. It can grasp the 'in-between' situation of young people in superdiverse contexts, where cultural relations are actively reworked (Synnes, 2018; Turner, Halse & Sriprakash, 2014).

Researchers have distinguished various features of such an everyday cosmopolitan disposition (ranging from the political over the aesthetic-cultural to the ethical) (Keating, 2016; Pichler, 2008; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). Yet, it is argued that individuals who self-identify as cosmopolitan usually do not display all possible features. This article employs an empirical measure of everyday cosmopolitanism at the individual level, which includes two

crucial dimensions. We focus on an 'identity' dimension (the extent to which individuals see and feel themselves as citizens of the world) and an 'attitude' dimension (the extent to which individuals hold attitudes and beliefs recognizing diversity) (Keating, 2016; Pichler, 2009). In line with Pichler (2009), who indicates a positive association between the identity and attitudinal components, we argue that both notions are closely related and needed for the measurement of everyday cosmopolitanism.

Religion and everyday cosmopolitanism

Literature emphasizes that being able to imagine and appreciate lives across social, cultural and ethno-religious boundaries requires a certain 'cosmopolitan imagination' (Delanty, 2009). In most literature, it has been largely presupposed that cosmopolitanism is intertwined with liberalism and secularism (cf. Appiah, 2017). Therefore, religion is usually not taken into consideration as a component of this cosmopolitan imagination.

While Western European countries have traditionally supported one or more versions of Christianity, in the last decades a more radical secularism has become influential, especially after 9/11, and most visibly in countries such as France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium. This secularist discourse pits religious identities and group membership against secular-political authority and equal citizenship (Modood, 2019). Much like the popular discourse on the subject, researchers and the social sciences highlight how the different moral grammars and worldviews of religions can lead people to emphasize the importance of group differences, with religion sometimes informing political conflict and violence (e.g. Gorski & Türkmen-Dervişoğlu, 2013; Juergensmeyer, Kitts & Jerryson, 2013). Koopmans (2015), for instance, studies how religiosity and fundamentalism among Muslims and Christians may incite hostile out-group views.

The negative social connotations of religion in Western Europe are particularly pronounced when it comes to Islam (Cesari, 2004; Foner & Alba, 2008). In the public and political debate, specific features of Islam are often problematized and seen as a threat to the liberal values of European countries. Subsequently, Muslims are frequently framed as *the* ethnic and religious other (Fadil, El Asri & Bracke, 2014; Zemni, 2011) and they are expected to not prioritize their religious identity, at least if they desire full membership to the national community (Modood, 2019). This is confirmed by scholarly work studying the salience of religious–secular symbolic boundaries in Europe (Foner & Alba, 2008; Trittler, 2019). Scholars mostly focus on Islam when discussing immigrant religion. While some focus on how Muslims

actively manage stereotypes and prejudices (e.g. Lamont, Morning & Mooney, 2002), others analyse Islam as a barrier to integration for minorities or discuss how it informs Muslims to be less accepting towards e.g. gender equality and gay rights (e.g. Norris & Inglehart, 2008). Generally, a lot of attention is dedicated to themes such as gender relations, freedom of speech, radicalism and the (in)compatibility between Islam and Western values.

Less research has focused on how religiosity among Muslims and Christians can incite positive out-group views and a cosmopolitan openness towards cultural differences. Religion is indeed rarely examined as positive contributor to the emergence of global citizenship and common humanity (Iqtidar, 2012; Levitt, 2008).

Nevertheless, there is also recognition of the role that religion has played in the cultivation of the cosmopolitan interest. At the macro-level, it is widely acknowledged that Islam and Christianity have contributed to the emergence of cosmopolitan ideals (Iqtidar, 2012; Turner, 2010b). By forming transcultural sacred imagined communities (albeit through colonial conquest), Christianity has developed into a world religion, entailing the notion of a global community of believers under the concept of 'Christendom' (Beyer, 1994). In the case of Islam, many observers have highlighted its universalistic dimensions and cosmopolitan human morals. This 'Muslim Cosmopolitanism' is in part the legacy of the doctrine of the Ummah – expressing the belief that the Islamic community should transcend local, national or ethnic boundaries – and the modern development of a global Muslim diaspora (Bowen, 2004). Furthermore, through intense cultural contact, religions like Islam and Christianity have developed an ecumenical consciousness and a tolerance of difference, albeit in slow and fragile ways (Turner, 2010b).

At the level of everyday interaction, religion can be used as a strategy of bridging group boundaries and engaging in equality claims-making based on a common identity. Although our study is based on survey data, it resonates with qualitative research demonstrating how different groups can employ universalistic religious repertoires to foreground a commitment to a common humanity. Researchers (e.g. Beaman, 2016; Jacobson, 1997; Lamont et al, 2002) have shown how Muslims tend to emphasize a commitment to a set of principles informed by Islamic moral universalism, asserting the intrinsic equality, morals and destiny of humans across all boundaries (nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc.). In an analogous way, Synnes (2018) has shown how Christian youth emphasize a universal understanding of their religion with values such as inclusiveness and transcendence of (ethnic) symbolic boundaries. Bayat (2009, p.186) has demonstrated how Muslims and Christians in an Egyptian suburb

have imaginary and prejudiced views of the 'other' but still develop an 'everyday cosmopolitan coexistence' among each other.

Furthermore, quantitative studies have shown the importance of redirecting collective identity projects to supra-national identities such as the cosmopolitan identity. Saroglou & Mathijsen (2007), for instance, have shown that Muslim and Christian youth with an immigration background identify less with the Belgian identity than with the world citizen identity. Likewise, Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte (2016) and Clycq, Driezen & Verschraegen (2020) have indicated that ethno-religious minorities in Belgium tend to redirect their identities towards cosmopolitan identities (here the European identity), and away from exclusive (sub)national identities. Moreover, as already indicated, research has shown that young people are more likely to identify as cosmopolitan, particularly when they live, or go to school, in urban areas (Keating, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2009).

In the case of Antwerp, we are interested in knowing whether there will be differences in cosmopolitan orientations between Muslims, Christians and non-religious youth. Based on the theoretical and empirical insights discussed above, we expect the following: *(H1) Muslim, Christian and non-religious urban youth will have cosmopolitan orientations and there will be no significant difference between religious and non-religious youth.*

The role of religiosity, religious identification and perceived discrimination

Further, we deepen our understanding of the relation between religion and everyday cosmopolitanism by examining the effects of religiosity, religious identification and perceived discrimination of ethnic and religious groups at school for Muslim and Christian youth.

Religiosity. As studies have indicated differing trends for various dimensions of religiosity, we will approach it as a multidimensional phenomenon (Molteni & Biolcati, 2018; Van Praag et al, 2016). Therefore, we will look at *religious practices* and *intrinsic-personal religiosity*.

With religious practices, we refer to the belonging of individuals to religious communities through (public) participation in religious rituals and communal activities (Huber & Huber, 2012). Research indicates a decline in the religious practices and beliefs of West European Christians (Molteni & Biolcati, 2018; Storm, 2011). However, for Christians with an immigration background religious practices can remain important (Maxwell & Bleich, 2014; Storm, 2011). Moreover, Christian practices and rituals still have a symbolic meaning in secularized European countries and are seen as part of the nation's heritage (Fleischmann &

Phalet, 2018; Storm, 2011). In contrast, religious practices of Muslims are often highly problematized in the public debate. National media pay quite a lot of (mostly negative) attention to Islamic rules and rites, such as the wearing of the headscarf (banned for public functions and in secondary schools), ritual slaughter, religious holidays, etc. (Ichau & d'Haenens, 2016). Research shows that (some) Muslims will simply continue these religious practices and use them as identity markers, partly in reaction to their problematization (Foner and Alba, 2008). It has indeed been demonstrated that religious traditions are highly valued for first and second generation Muslims (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). However, researchers also show a decline in religious practices of second generation Muslims (Maliepaard, Lubbers & Gijsberts, 2010; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012).

This brings us to the second religiosity dimension, i.e. intrinsic-personal religiosity. This refers to the interest in religious values, the meaning of religion and the emotional dimension. It is the perception of oneself as religious, beyond practices, dogma or official membership, where leading religiously meaningful lives is a goal in itself (Allport & Ross, 1967; Ghorpade, Lackrtitz & Singh, 2006). This resonates with a widespread observation of the emergence of individualized forms of religiosity. Several sociologists of religion have described how an important segment of the Catholic world has distanced itself from the Church (especially in relation to religious practices) and increasingly define their religion in terms of so-called typical Christian values such as social justice, a humane approach towards people and solidarity (Cipriani, 2001; Dobbelaere & Voyé, 1990). For Muslims as well, it is increasingly argued that they negotiate their religiosity in the West European context by individualizing and privatizing their religious practices (Cesari, 2004). This trend would make religious public practices play a less important role, as Muslims tend to prioritize an 'Islam of the heart' (Beaman, 2016; Killian, 2007). Various scholars studied the effects of different dimensions of religiosity on e.g. outgroup perceptions, civic and social engagement, identification processes, etc. On the one hand, Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007) argue that Muslims who are involved in religious practices show a dis-identification with the national (Dutch) identity, which could indicate social closure. Likewise, Scheepers, Gijsberts & Coenders (2002) argue that Christians who attend church more frequently are more prejudiced towards others. On the other hand, some researchers also indicate a positive association between churchgoing and open views to immigration and racial differences (Storm, 2011). In the case of intrinsic-personal religiosity, researchers argue that individual religiosity reduces negative out-group views and prejudices (Allport & Ross, 1967;

Scheepers et al, 2002; Storm, 2011). Lastly, Grundel and Maliepaard (2012) show that personal religious values of Muslims are compatible with democratic values and tolerance towards difference. While these studies did not directly examine cosmopolitan orientations, we follow these empirical insights and expect that: *(H2a) Religious practices and intrinsic-personal religiosity will be positively related to everyday cosmopolitan orientations of Muslim and Christian youth.*

Religious identification.[7] We follow previous research in examining religion as a grounding for a social identification (Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman, 2010). Hence, it is constructed through social interactions and its embeddedness in the social context. Religious identification is often seen as a dimension of religiosity. However, researchers argue that it is primarily defined by internal or self-categorization and external or other-identification (i.e. how somebody is perceived by others in the social environment) (Jenkins, 2014) of an individual with a religious category rather than effective religiosity (Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016; Wolf, 2005).

Ribberink et al (2017a) argue that Muslim identity is constructed through the negotiation with non-Muslims within a broader and predominantly secular (or Christian), West European context, and is therefore 'made in Europe'. As previously discussed, Islam is often presented as less compatible with so-called 'western values'. Thus, it is to be expected that the problematization of their religion affects the self-understanding of Muslims. One recurrent finding is the emergence of a salient Muslim identity (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Maxwell & Bleich, 2014; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016). Muslims tend to emphasize their religious identity as a strategy of revalorizing their stigmatized identity (Lamont et al, 2002). As Muslims are often 'held accountable' – meaning they have to account not only for themselves, but also for what other Muslims do or say – this oppositional or defensive identity can emerge as a politicized rather than merely a religious identification (Brubaker, 2013). Researchers argue, then, that a Muslim – communal – identity is based on its external stigmatization and categorization, rather than specific intrinsic religious features (Beaman, 2016).

Christian identity is becoming less salient in Europe and it is a less contested identity for non-Western Christians (as their religion is seen as part of Europe's cultural heritage). However, scholars also have indicated how, recently, Christianity has symbolically been culturalized

[7] While we acknowledge the active nature of identification processes, in this article we also use 'religious identity' to capture the categorical dimension of identity.

in West European societies (Joppke, 2018; Storm, 2011). Hervieu-Léger (2000) has identified this trend as 'ethnic religion'. It is used in secularizing countries to identify with national traditions and an ethnic heritage of Europe, rather than with faith and intrinsic religious beliefs. Elaborating on these findings, we expect that: *(H2b) Religious identification will be negatively related to everyday cosmopolitan orientations of Muslim and Christian youth.*

Perceived discrimination of ethnic/religious groups at school. Maxwell and Bleich (2014) show that both Muslims and Christians with an immigration background experience social exclusion. However, research indicates that anti-Muslim feelings are generally more widespread than anti-immigrant resentments (Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016). Likewise, in the case of Belgium, research shows that Muslim youths are more likely than other minorities to perceive discrimination at school (Clycq et al, 2014; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). The headscarf ban is set in almost all schools and teachers tend to have negative attitudes towards the Islamic religiosity of students (Ağirdağ, Loobuyck & Van Houtte, 2012; Van Praag et al, 2016). Not only is Islam seen as a barrier for general integration into the mainstream (Foner & Alba, 2008; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016), it is also conceived to be a hindrance to educational success (Van Praag et al, 2016). As previously discussed, experiencing social exclusion and disadvantages at school may incite defensive and oppositional orientations. Wimmer and Soehl (2014) argue that the inability of immigrants for blurring symbolic boundaries towards others is associated with discrimination, rather than with their cultural or religious values. In this study, we will focus on perceived discrimination by teachers, as the teacher–student relation is one of the most important factors in students' trajectories (Nouwen & Clycq, 2016). We can expect that: *(H2c) Perceived discrimination will be negatively related to everyday cosmopolitan orientations. This will be mostly the case for Muslims, as they are more likely to perceive discrimination.*

Method

Data

We used data collected in February and March 2017 from 1039 students in the 5th and 6th year from 17 secondary education schools in Antwerp, Belgium. A questionnaire was filled out in class with one or two researchers present; it was administered in Dutch and took approximately 40 minutes. The questionnaires were anonymous and analysed in confidentiality. The participating schools varied according to educational track (academic

track [ASO], vocational track [BSO] and technical track [TSO]) and educational network (four belonged to the state network, 11 to the Catholic network and two to the city network). They varied according to ethnic composition, which is measured by the Flemish Ministry of Education by the home language of the students. Three schools had over 60% of students with another home language next to Dutch, 10 schools had 30–60% of students and four schools had fewer than 30% of students (Agodi, 2017).

The total sample consisted of Muslims (*n* = 496; 47.7%), Christians (*n* = 225; 21.7%), non-religious (*n* = 248; 23.9%) and other religious youth (*n* = 70; 6.7%). The latter will not be included in the comparative analysis due to the small numbers of respondents. In a second phase, we conducted a subset analysis on the sample of Muslim and Christian youth. The sample of Muslim youth consisted mostly of second generation migrants (*n* = 379; 82.2%). The sample of Christian youth[8] consisted of 34.5% (*n* = 76) Belgian 'origin' students, 43.6% (*n* = 96) second generation migrants and 21.8% (*n* = 48) first generation migrants.

Research design

First, we examined to what extent Muslim, Christian and non-religious youth differ in their everyday cosmopolitan orientations. We conducted a one-way ANOVA analysis with a post-hoc Bonferroni test and discussed the effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) (using SPSS statistics 24).

Second, we examined the effects of religiosity, religious identification and perceived discrimination (and their interactions) on everyday cosmopolitanism for the subsets of Muslim (*n* = 496) and Christian (*n* = 225) youth. We did not include non-religious students, as non-religious practices and value systems were not measured in our study. We conducted a multilevel regression analysis as the data consist of a clustered sample of students nested within schools (using MLwiN, two level procedure). Unconditional models were estimated to determine the amount of variance that occurs on the school level for everyday cosmopolitanism. For the subset of Muslim students, there was no variance situated on the school level. For the Christian students, there was only 9.6% of the variance situated on the school level. This is in line with other studies, indicating that most of the variation occurs within schools and between pupils (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). We do belief it is important

[8] We do not have data on the internal religious diversity of this sample. However, as the sample consists of 33 nationalities, we expect it contains Catholics (as Belgium is a Catholic country), Protestants and Orthodox Christians. We follow the findings of the Pew Research Center (2017) that shows that Catholics and Protestants in Western Europe are religiously similar and view each other as part of one religious family. Therefore, we focus on Christians in general.

to report a multilevel analysis to account for the nested structure of the data. Further, we estimated random intercept models to explore the individual-level effects. We controlled for gender, educational track, migration status and the educational level of the parents. The metric predictors are grand mean centred and unstandardized effects are reported in the tables. Tests to see if the data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern for the models.

Measures

The dependent variable, *Everyday cosmopolitan orientations*, was measured by a five-point scale ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') based on five items (based on Pichler, 2009; Saran & Kalliny, 2012): 'Above all, I see myself as world citizen', 'I believe that humans all over the world have a lot in common', 'I believe I respect the culture of others as much as my culture', 'I believe it is our duty to be solidary towards fellow citizens, whatever their ethnicity and religion' and 'I believe every human has the right to be respected'. Answers to the five categories were averaged. This component emerged from principal component analysis on 12 items. The scale acquired an adequate Cronbach alpha of 0.70. Previous research (Keating, 2016; Pichler, 2009) treated the identity and attitude dimensions as separate variables, both entailing various items. Our measurement consists both dimensions as (1) we were limited in the number of items measuring cosmopolitan identity, (2) the literature suggests a close and meaningful association between both dimensions and (3) PCA analysis indicated strong associations between the items.

We include several independents variables. First, *Religious affiliation* was measured by the question 'to which religious tradition or belief system do you belong?' Eight response categories were reduced to four: 'Christianity', 'Islam', 'Non religious' and 'other'. Second, *Religiosity* of the respondents was measured by three dimensions: (1) *Prayer* that consisted of two categories: those who pray and those who do not pray. (2) *Church/mosque attendance* consisted of two categories: those who go to the mosque/ church and those who do not go. (3) *Intrinsic-personal religiosity* was measured by a five-point scale based on four items (based on Ghorpade et al, 2006; Grundel & Maliepaard, 2012; Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007): 'I see myself as a religious person, even when I do not strongly practise my religion (by e.g. attending religious services, praying, etc.)', 'I feel proud when I think of my faith',[9] 'when I am worried about some- thing or I feel nervous, my faith helps me to calm down' and 'my

[9] This item measures a general affection towards faith itself, rather than a narrow conceptualization of the religious in-group.

faith brings meaning to my life'. The scale acquired a Cronbach alpha of 0.79. Third, *Religious identification* was measured by the indication of respondents of how strongly they identified as Muslim or Christian on a five-point scale (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). Fourth, *Perceived discrimination (of ethnic or religious groups) at school* was measured by a five-point scale based on four items (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018): 'Most teachers favour students of their own ethnic or religious group', 'students are discriminated by some teachers, because of their ethnicity or religion', 'most teachers consider members of other ethnic groups, unfairly, as troublemakers' and 'not everyone is treated equally at school'. The scale acquired a Cronbach alpha of 0.78.

Lastly, we controlled for the *migration status* of the respondents. Respondents are defined as '1st generation' when they came to Belgium after the age of 15 or between the age of six and 15. They are defined as '2nd generation' when they came to Belgium before the age of six or when they are born in Belgium, but one or both of the parents are not. They are defined as having no migration status when they are born in Belgium, as well as their parents. The latter category is adapted as the reference category for the Christian sample, while for the Muslim sample the 1st generation is selected. In addition, we controlled for *gender* (female as reference category), *educational track* (academic 'ASO', vocational 'BSO' and technical 'TSO', the first being the reference category) and *the educational level of the mother and father* (low, middle, high and other, the first being the reference category). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the respondents.

Results

Everyday cosmopolitanism among Muslim, Christian and non-religious youth

The mean levels on everyday cosmopolitanism for all the groups suggest that Muslim students have a slightly higher level of cosmopolitan orientations (M = 4.1; SD = 0.61; n = 491) than Christians (M = 3.96; SD = 0.65; n = 224) and non-religious students (M = 4.0; SD = 0.59; n = 246). Christian students have slightly lower levels of cosmopolitanism than Muslim and non-religious students. The average scores of the three groups suggest that, on average, the respondents agree with orienting as cosmopolitan.

There is a statistically significant difference between the groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(3,882) = 4.923$; $p < 0.009$). Post-hoc testing reveals that Muslim students are significantly more cosmopolitan than Christians (diff = −0.133; $p < 0.05$). The Cohen's d (= 0.21) shows a rather small effect size. In line with our first expectations, there is no

significant difference between Christian and non-religious students and Muslim and non-religious students regarding their level of everyday cosmopolitan orientations.

The effects of religiosity, religious identification and perceived discrimination on everyday cosmopolitanism for Muslim and Christian youth

In a second phase, we aim to find out the effects of religiosity, religious identification and perceived discrimination on everyday cosmopolitanism for the subsets of Muslim and Christian pupils. It must be noted that prior to these analysis, we tested the effects of the main variables and religious affiliation in a joint analysis. In this model, the effect of religious affiliation was significant and showed that Muslims are more cosmopolitan than Christians ($b = 0.131$; $p < 0.01$). Interaction effects between religious affiliation and the main variables were not significant, meaning that the difference on cosmopolitan orientations between Christians and Muslims could not be explained by religious factors. Therefore, we decided to further examine the effects of the main variables within the groups, and argue that a subset analysis will deepen our understanding of the questions at hand.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the independent variables: frequencies (%), means and standard deviations.

		Muslim youth		Christian youth	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Independents	Intrinsic-personal religiosity	4.41 (N=492)	0.61	3,47 (N=210)	1,02
	% Prayer	(N=491)	0.43	(N=208)	0,50
	Seldom/never	25.3		51,9	
	Sometimes/often	74.7		48,1	
	% Mosque/church attendance	(N=487)	0.49	(N=208)	0,48
	Seldom/never	61.3		64,9	
	Sometimes/often	38.7		35.1	
	Religious identification	4.51 (N = 491)	0.80	3,59 (N=221)	1,02
	Perceived discrimination	2.9 (N = 481)	0.85	2,59 (N=223)	0,82
Controls	% Gender	(N=494)	0,45	(N=224)	0,46
	Female	63.6		69,6	
	Male	36.4		30,4	
	% Educational track	(N=495)	0,48	(N=225)	0,68
	ASO	39,2		43,6	
	TSO	35,2		44	
	BSO	25,7		12,4	
	% Educational level mother	(N=494)	1,35	(N=224)	1,19
	Low	49.4		14,7	
	Middle	21,5		24,1	
	High	12,6		37,5	
	Other	16,6		23,6	
	% Educational level father	(N=480)	1.51	(N=214)	1,18
	Low	32.7		10,3	
	Middle	21		26,6	
	High	17,7		38,8	
	Other	28,6		24,3	
	% Migration status	(N=478)	0,47	(N=220)	0,88
	None			34,5	
	2nd	81,2		43,6	
	1st	18,8		21,8	

The results for Muslim youth (Table 2) show that an intrinsic-personal religiosity has a positive effect on everyday cosmopolitanism ($b = 0.137$; $p < 0.05$). Contrastingly, there is no significant effect of prayer and mosque attendance. Further, regarding the effect of religious identification for Muslims, there is a negative effect ($b = -0.111$; $p < 0.01$). Muslim students who identify more strongly as Muslim will have lower cosmopolitan orientations. In addition, the effect of perceiving discrimination of ethnic or religious groups at school has a negative effect ($b = -0.092$; $p < 0.01$). Interactions effects between the main variables are not significant.

Table 2. Multilevel linear regression on everyday cosmopolitanism among Muslim youth: Unstandardized coefficients (b) and standard errors (SEs)

Random intercept model: individual student level		**Zero model**	**Model 1**	
			b	SE
Main	Intrinsic-personal religiosity		0,137*	0,055
	Praying (never)		0,093	0,073
	Mosque attendance (never)		-0,058	0,068
	Religious identification		-0,111**	0,040
	Perceived discrimination		-0,092**	0,033
Controls	Gender (female)		-0,203**	0,065
	Educational track (ASO)			
	TSO		-0,090	0,066
	BSO		-0,320***	0,077
	Educational level mother (low)			
	Middle		0,302***	0,077
	High		0,138	0,096
	Other		0,180*	0,088
	Educational level father (low)			
	Middle		-0,144	0,078
	High		-0,300***	0,090
	Other		-0,225**	0,078
	Migration status (1st)		0,031	0,073
Model parameters	Constant	4,102		4,266
	Within school variance σ^2	0,374		0,318
	Error term	0,024		0,022
	% variance explained (level 1)			15%
	Log-likelihood	910,167		708,411
	N	491		419

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

The control effects indicate that Muslim boys display a lower level of cosmopolitan- ism than Muslim girls (b = −0.203; $p < 0.01$). Students in BSO do significantly have lower cosmopolitan orientations than students in ASO (b = −0.320; $p < 0.001$), while students in TSO do not differ from ASO students. Regarding the effect of migration status, there is no difference between second and first generation of migration. Having a mother with a middle educational level will lead to higher cosmopolitan orientations than having a mother with a low educational level (b = 0.302; $p < 0.001$). Having a father with a high educational level will lead to lower cosmopolitan orientations than having a father with a low educational level (b = −0.300; $p < 0.001$).

The results for Christian students (Table 3, model 1) indicate that the main variables do not influence their everyday cosmopolitanism. In model 2, the negative effect of perceived discrimination (b = −0.223; $p < 0.01$) is moderated by going to church (b = 0.333; $p < 0.01$). Respondents who do not go to church experience a negative effect of discrimination on their cosmopolitan orientations.

The control effects (Table 3, model 1) show that there is no effect for gender on cosmopolitan

orientations. Students in TSO (b = −0.230; $p < 0.05$) and BSO (b = −0.463; $p < 0.05$) do significantly display lower cosmopolitan orientations than students in ASO. Further, there is no significant difference in cosmopolitanism between Christians with no migration background and students from a first or second generation of migration. Students with a mother with a high educational level have higher cosmopolitan orientations than students with a mother with a low educational level (b = 0.345; $p < 0.05$). Students with a father with a middle educational level show lower cosmopolitanism, than students with a father with a low educational level (b = −0.434; $p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Multilevel linear regression on everyday cosmopolitanism among Christian youth: Unstandardized coefficients (b) and standard errors (SEs)

Random intercept model: individual student level		**Zero model**	**Model 1**		**Model 2**	
			b	SE	b	SE
Main	Intrinsic-personal religiosity		0.079	0.061	0.074	0.060
	Praying (never)		-103	0.129	-0.089	0.127
	Church attendance (never)		0.168	0.124	0.130	0.122
	Religious identification		-0.017	0.056	-0.011	0.055
	Perceived discrimination		-0.084	0.058	-0.223**	0.074
	Church x discrimination				0.333**	0.115
Controls	Gender (female)		-0.181	0.101	-0.214*	0.100
	Educational track (ASO)					
	TSO		-0.230*	0.115	-0.222*	0.109
	BSO		-0.463*	0.180	-0.473**	0.170
	Educational level mother (low)					
	Middle		0.267	0.180	0.307	0.177
	High		0.345*	0.172	0.352*	0.169
	Other		0.217	0.169	0.241	0.166
	Educational level father (low)					
	Middle		-0.434*	0.198	-0.433*	0.195
	High		-0.368	0.194	-0.367	0.191
	Other		-0.360	0.195	-0.402*	0.192
	Migration status (None)					
	1st		0.122	0.152	0.172	0.149
	2nd		0.105	0.123	0.148	0.120
Model parameters	Constant	3,959		4,221		4,184
	Within school variance σ^2	0,385		0,36		0,349
	Error term	0,038		0,039		0,037
	% variance explained (level 1)			6,5%		9,3%
	Log-likelihood	435,909		349,164		341,083
	N	224		188		188

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Discussion and conclusion

This study contributes to the understanding of cosmopolitanism 'from below' by focusing on everyday cosmopolitan orientations, such as a world citizen identity and openness to cultural differences, among youth in the superdiverse city of Antwerp. In this context, young people regularly engage with people from diverse ethno-cultural and religious backgrounds. Therefore, these teens act upon various cultural inputs from diverse peer networks, families, and local urban and global popular culture (Turner, Halse & Sriprakash, 2014). Our study contributes to the scarce knowledge on how this younger generation, socialized in this emerging superdiverse urban context, construct and constantly rework their multiple identities and cultural relations. In addition, it contributes to the scarce empirical research on the relation between religion and everyday cosmopolitanism. It is often argued that religious doctrines impose closure on social groups, compromising principles of equal citizenship and disallowing cross-cultural and cross-religious connectivities. Indeed, some scholars and public opinion leaders associate cosmopolitanism and liberalism with secularism, while religious values are perceived as incompatible with cosmopolitan beliefs. While secular boundaries are salient in Western Europe, and religious practices and beliefs in general are seen as illegitimate (Trittler, 2019), particularly Muslims are depicted as *the* cultural other in European countries (Cesari, 2004; Zemni, 2011).

However, our study shows that there is no difference between religious and non-religious youth regarding their everyday cosmopolitan orientations. While Muslims tend to be more cosmopolitan than Christians are, the difference (effect size) is rather small. Generally, our study suggests that Muslim, Christian and non-religious youth identify as world citizens and express openness to cultural differences to the same degree. In comparison to other Belgian studies that are concerned with (sub-)national and supra-national identities among youth (see e.g. Ağirdağ et al, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Saroglou & Mathijsen, 2007), the mean levels on everyday cosmopolitanism in this study are high. Despite the differences in questionnaires between the studies, it might be concluded, then, that an everyday cosmopolitan identity (and associated attitudes) seems to be a viable collective identity for youth who negotiate multiple identity belongings within a superdiverse urban context. In addition, our study shows that young people can develop cosmopolitan attitudes, by studying orientations on how to engage with diversity on a daily basis, going beyond an elitist understanding of cosmopolitanism. Lastly, it must be argued that our study provides a perspective on the compatibility of religion, and more particularly Islam, with

cosmopolitan orientations, something that has often been questioned.

Further, we aimed to deepen our understanding of the role of religion by examining the effects of religiosity (religious practices and intrinsic-personal religiosity), religious identification and perceived discrimination of ethnic/religious groups in school on everyday cosmopolitan orientations for Muslim and Christian youth. Our study shows that for Muslim youth an intrinsic-personal religiosity is positively associated with everyday cosmopolitanism, while religious practices did not have an effect. Scholars such as Roy (2014) have argued that the individualization and essentialist perception of religion as separate from culture fragments religious authority and facilitates religious extremism. However, such perspectives run the risk of overlooking ongoing processes of individualization by Muslims as part of everyday practices for negotiating and balancing multiple identity belongings and various cultural expectations in Western Europe (Jeldtoft, 2012). Indeed, research has shown that individualization is an active strategy for managing stigma related to Muslims' religion and for equalizing and adapting themselves to mainstream society (Beaman, 2016; Killian, 2007; Synnes, 2018). In addition, our results show that religious identification and perceived discrimination are negatively associated with everyday cosmopolitanism for Muslims. As discussed, the problematization of Muslim identity in Western Europe can result in a defensive and politicized identity (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Foner & Alba, 2008), and thus it is less associated with specific intrinsic religious features (Beaman, 2016). A stigmatized religious identity and discrimination can reinforce separation and intolerance (Cesari, 2004) and thus hinder a cosmopolitan openness. As argued by Werbner (2015), a cosmopolitan identity remains fragile, as institutional racism, xenophobia, discrimination and social exclusion hampers a cosmopolitan creativity. Our study demonstrates that religious beliefs can be used for Muslim youth to emphasize an openness to cultural differences, yet policy makers and teachers should be aware of the (negative) impact of stigmatization and discrimination related to Muslims' religiosity. These results thus not only show *that* religion is a significant factor in predicting cosmopolitanism among Muslim youth, but also suggest that scholars and policy makers should discuss *how* religiosity can be used as an asset for emphasizing cosmopolitan orientations.

Contrary to the findings on our Muslim sample, our results demonstrate that cosmopolitan orientations among Christians cannot be explained by religious factors. This can be due to, firstly, the declining salience of Christian identity, practices and beliefs in Western Europe (Molteni & Biolcati, 2018; Storm, 2011). Secondly, Christian practices still have symbolic

resonance in Western Europe and are seen as part of Europe's cultural heritage (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Storm, 2011). Therefore, Christian beliefs and identity are less contested and problematized, while for Muslims there is a pressing need of negotiating and using their religion for blurring symbolic boundaries with others. We did expect a negative effect of Christian identification, as it is increasingly used in Western Europe in a 'culturalized' or 'ethnic' way. We did not find this result. Interestingly, we did find that a negative effect of perceived discrimination was moderated by going to church. A negative association between perceiving discrimination and cosmopolitan orientations is therefore only true for those who do not go to church. Further research may explore what other variables can encourage or impede the cosmopolitan views of Christian youth.

Finally, we note some limitations of this study. First, it can be argued that the relation we have studied – the impact of religiosity on cosmopolitan attitudes – can be reversed. Yet, previous research has already examined extensively the influence of out-group perceptions and attitudes of non-Muslims on Muslims' religiosity and identity (e.g. Maxwell & Bleich, 2014), showing that negative out-group views lead to a higher religiosity and salient religious identification for Muslims. Hence, we considered it interesting to research how Muslims' religiosity and identity in their turn influence their out-group perceptions. Yet, more in-depth investigation of the different mechanisms driving the relationship between religiosity and cosmopolitan attitudes is needed. Second, this multilevel study did not find significant variance on the school level. However, based on previous research, we would expect that there are significant differences on the school level concerning the out-group views and relations of students (Vervaet et al, 2016). Thus, further research with a large sample of schools is needed (our sample size was limited to 17 schools). Third, our sample of Muslims consisted of predominantly North African (mostly Moroccans) youth of the second generation. As it did not strongly include variation on ethnic background and migration status, it is difficult to assess the impact of both variables on cosmopolitanism. Further research can explore if there is a significant impact, by adjusting the sample strategy. Lastly, our study focused on youth in the context of a superdiverse city. Further research can explore these new orientation processes and the generalization of these results to other institutional contexts and urban or rural contexts.

Chapter 7

Negotiating a contested identity: religious individualism among Muslim youth in a superdiverse city

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With Verschraegen & Clycq

This paper aims to understand how young Muslims in the superdiverse city of Antwerp negotiate the tensions between their religious identification and the broader cultural framework of individualism. Young Muslims in Antwerp face the challenge to present themselves as autonomous, while maintaining their religious identification. Based on 26 interviews with Muslim students in two secondary schools, we describe how presenting a dignified self to both non-Muslim and Muslim audiences requires a delicate balancing act. Drawing conceptually from cultural sociology, we explore how our respondents present themselves towards various audiences by selectively employing elements from the cultural repertoire of 'religious individualism'. In our analysis, we examine four ways in which respondents employ this repertoire to rework the potential tensions and present themselves as agentive within their religious framework. We also discuss how negotiating a contested identity requires more taxing boundary work for girls, and how they challenge gender norms without denying their religious identification. Overall, our analysis demonstrates how young Muslims in a West European context engage in complex boundary work and creatively draw on the cultural repertoire of religious individualism to negotiate their multiple identifications.

Introduction and research objectives

Chaimae is a young Belgian Muslim girl, nineteen years old, who presents herself, like many of her Muslim peers, as *"a Flemish and Belgian Muslim woman with Moroccan roots"*. While she emphasizes that she feels *"fully Belgian, fully Moroccan and fully Muslim",* she also explains it can be difficult to combine these various identifications. For instance, she has decided to wear her headscarf only sometimes because *"I can't wear it at school [due to an almost general ban on headscarves and other religious symbols in Flemish schools] and I don't wear it at official appointments such as job interviews […] if I feel that I will be judged, I would take it off".* On such occasions Chaimae takes her headscarf off to avoid feeling stigmatized by non-Muslim audiences, yet she wears it whenever possible because she wants to feel "*good*

[10] Driezen, A., Verschraegen, G., & Clycq, N. (2021). Negotiating a contested identity: Religious individualism among Muslim youth in a superdiverse city. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *82*, 25-36.

enough" as a Muslim. Chaimae belongs to a broader Belgian 'secular' context while identifying as Muslim, an identity that is often treated as incompatible with the dominant society. Indeed, second-generation Muslim youth in a West European country face the difficult situation of having to construct their multiple identifications in a context where Islam is stigmatized and problematized, and Muslims are often seen as the cultural and religious other (Fadil, El Asri & Bracke, 2014; Modood, 2019; Sunier, 2014; Zemni, 2011).

The main objective of this article is to understand how Muslim youth in Belgium experience and negotiate potential tensions between their religious identification and the dominant cultural framework of individualism (O'Brien, 2015, 2017). Young Muslims in the superdiverse city of Antwerp are, like their peers, socialized within this modern socio-cultural context. Simultaneously, they are socialized in (often stigmatized) religious minority communities, embedded in this broader context, and most identify as Muslim (Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Driezen, Verschraegen & Clycq, 2020; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018). While Muslim youth wish to participate in religious practices and traditions and maintain their belonging within their Muslim communities (families, peers, etc.), their non-Muslim friends, teachers and broader society often expect them to prioritize a lifestyle stressing individualism over religious tradition. This can lead to tensions as our respondents are confronted on a daily basis with non-Muslim audiences questioning their autonomy and agency. Hence, our analysis will explore how our young respondents, who self-identify as Muslim, develop different strategies of 'self-presentation' (Goffman, 2002) in relation to non-Muslim as well as Muslim audiences (O'Brien, 2015, 2017). Our study is based on 26 in-depth interviews with Muslim youth, aged between 16 and 19, in the third grade of two secondary schools, in the superdiverse city of Antwerp.

To better understand how young Muslims negotiate these tensions, we draw upon different concepts from cultural sociology. First, to unpack the symbolic interactions between Muslim youth and non-Muslim groups we employ the concepts of 'symbolic boundaries'. Second, to understand how young Muslims rework tensions between their religious identification and the cultural framework of individualism we elaborate on the concept of 'religious individualism' developed by O'Brien (2015). We argue that it constitutes a 'cultural repertoire' (Lamont & Small, 2008; Swidler, 1986) on which young Muslims can draw to manage their contested religious identification. These theoretical approaches will be discussed in the first section of the paper. Thereafter, we describe the tensions Muslim youth can experience when their religious identification is treated as opposed or even incompatible with personal choice,

autonomy and authenticity. Subsequently, we argue that the repertoire of 'religious individualism' enables them to construct their definitions of agency within their religious identification. After presenting our method, our analysis highlights in more detail how the repertoire of 'religious individualism' is used by young Muslims distinguishing four ways in which respondents enact this repertoire and creatively rework their contested religious identification.

Theoretical framework

We draw on three interrelated concepts from cultural sociology: symbolic boundary work, cultural repertoires and religious individualism.

Symbolic boundary work

Firstly, this article draws upon a symbolic boundary approach, which recognizes that everyday categorizations are socially constructed, based upon culturally shared meanings (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Boundaries separate people into groups and often generate feelings of in-group similarity and out-group hostility, constructing a hierarchy of moral worth between groups (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Small, Harding & Lamont, 2010). Moreover, symbolic boundaries may transform into social boundaries, which are objectified forms of social differences and can lead to unequal access to resources and social opportunities (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Thus, it can manifest and institutionalize into patterns of social exclusion on the group-level.

This dynamic approach emphasizes the on-going creation and reworking of group boundaries, at the group as well the individual level. We will focus on a religious symbolic boundary in Western Europe, which still has not received enough attention within this literature (Trittler, 2019). This approach enables us to understand the Belgian (and broader western European) context of a bright religious symbolic boundary (Alba, 2005; Foner & Alba, 2008), wherein young Muslims need to negotiate their religious identification. It allows to understand how these youths creatively, strategically and actively rework the boundaries they are confronted with. We turn to the concept of 'cultural repertoires' to better understand on which cultural resources Muslim youth can draw to negotiate religious symbolic boundaries.

Cultural repertoires

Secondly, to show how young people creatively make sense of their identity, we make use of the notion of 'cultural repertoires' (Lamont & Small, 2008; Swidler, 1986). Repertoires are culturally available 'caches of ideas' that help social actors to give meaning to a multifaceted

and often contradictory social reality and construct their identities within it. There is some slippage in terminology between cultural repertoires and notions such as cultural narratives, resources, or discourses[11] (see Silber, 2003; Small, Harding & Lamont, 2010). However, the idea of repertoire has gained significant currency - especially in cultural sociology - as "it allows for a measure of individual meaning and agency in mobilizing and choosing a specific configuration of cultural resources, while also stressing the public, and publicly available nature of those resources" (Silber, 2003, p. 431). It brings attention to how social agents selectively draw from elements from larger repertoires to make sense of their social world, to justify their (in)actions and to position themselves within particular social contexts, vis-à-vis various 'others' (Lizardo & Strand, 2010; Swidler, 1986).

Religious individualism

Thirdly, we refer to the cultural repertoire of 'religious individualism' (O'Brien, 2015), which involves a broad set of cultural ideas articulating individual autonomy and agency within a religious framework. As noted by O'Brien (2015, 2017), 'religious individualism' can be seen as a specific mode of cultural meaning-making among young believers, as a way of negotiating potential conflicts between individualism and their religious identification. The notion gives an important nuance to the classic debate on secularization in Western societies. Instead of opposing religion and individuality, the repertoire of 'religious individualism' offers resources for religious individuals to emphasise their autonomy in being religious, and to express their personal choice within a religious frame (O'Brien, 2015).

Rather than seeing 'religious individualism' as a singular, static piece of culture, we want to emphasize its multifaceted and dynamic character. Through our interview data, we will show how Muslims youth situationally draw on different elements and ideas in the broader repertoire, in this way also contributing to the further evolution of the repertoire. While the 'religious individualism' repertoire has been mainly studied in North-American context (O'Brien 2015, 2017; Pearce, Uecker & Denton, 2019), our findings emerged in a specific West European

[11] The concept of culture repertoires is related to the idea of 'narratives'. Narratives draw attention to how social actors interpret their lives as a set of stories that are causally linked sequences of events. Researching 'narratives' is useful to understand how individuals can collectively narrate their experiences in dealing with their minority identity (Prins, Van Stekelenburg, Polletta & Klandermans, 2012; Small, Harding & Lamont, 2010). It is less suited to gain insight into how actors aim to present a dignified self to very different audiences, as the idea of a 'narrative' presumes a certain continuity and consistency in personal identities and "views individual's actions as chosen consistently with their personal stories" (Small, Harding & Lamont, 2010, p.17).

context and reflect the specific social situation of young Muslims in a superdiverse urban setting.

Reworking a contested Muslim identity in Western Europe

The tension between modern individualism and religious (Muslim) identification

Modern individualism refers to the 'individual-as-actor' worldview that is central to modern societies, and requires individuals to present themselves as autonomous, self-reflexive actors, capable of taking their own decisions (Cortois & Laermans, 2018; O'Brien, 2015). Within the overarching cultural framework of individualism, two important strands can be distinguished, namely moral and expressive individualism (Cortois & Laermans, 2018). Moral individualism can be understood as the belief that every human should be treated as equal and worthy of respect (cf. Durkheim, 1976 [1898]). Expressive individualism refers to the importance of expressing one's 'true self' and authenticity (cf. Parsons, 1974). Both forms have become dominant cultural frames. They are highly institutionalized in West European societies (e.g. school, work, family) and have become powerful repertoires vis-à-vis which individuals must position themselves.

Developing a religious identity in this individualist culture is challenging, as the latter expects young people to live a life emphasizing personal choice and self-development over commitment to tradition and religious communities (O'Brien, 2017). Indeed, the process of individualization is seen as central to the secularization trend of Western Europe and refers to the de-institutionalization and rejection of traditional religious authorities and religiously informed morality (Casanova, 2011; Dobbelaere, 1999). Self-expression is associated with anti-structure (Cortois & Laermans, 2018) and agency and autonomy are often perceived as a movement against religious norms and tradition (Modood, 2019; O'Brien, 2015).

Hence, Muslim youth in Europe face the challenge to demonstrate that individual autonomy is compatible with being religious. They must do this, however, in a context where Islam is "a chronic object of discussion and debate" (Brubaker, 2013, p.4). Islam is often problematized in public and political debate and viewed as inherently incompatible with so-called 'Western' secular and liberal values such as individualism, neutrality, freedom of speech and gender equality (Cesari, 2004; Fadil, El Asri & Bracke, 2014; Modood, 2019; Phalet, Maliepaard, Fleischmann & Güngör, 2013; Trittler, 2019). In debates about the hijab, Muslims are frequently painted as cultural outsiders, ill-equipped to adapt to Western norms. Islamic prayer – which blurs the boundaries between places of worship and public spaces (e.g. praying at

work) - can be perceived as a disruptive intrusion into public life by a 'foreign' religion (Göle, 2017).

Given this clear (Islamic) religious-secular symbolic boundary in Western Europe (Trittler, 2019), Muslims, are often expected to comply with the dominant secular repertoire and to not prioritize their religious identification if they wish to claim equal membership of the national belonging (Modood, 2019; Sunier, 2014). Generally, young Muslims must relate to a dominant non-Muslim and secular society that expects religion to be experienced in private (Casanova, 2011; Dobbelaere, 1999) and thus defines how and where Muslim identity should be practised in public life (e.g. the enforcement of widespread headscarf bans in schools and on the labour market). While young Muslims can choose to be involved in religious activities, from the dominant, secular point of view this is seen as 'unyouthful' and lacking in personal autonomy (Amir-Moazami, 2010; Bayat & Herrera, 2010). Autonomy is then perceived to be expressed not by, for instance, choosing to follow religious rules and refrain from 'typical' or 'normal' youthful behaviours such as drinking alcohol (Amir-Moazami, 2010; Mahmood, 2011). Therefore, young Muslims who identify as such and present themselves as modern, self-conscience individuals when adhering to religious expectations such as praying, modesty, avoiding alcohol or premarital intercourse still have their agency questioned.

While young Muslims are expected to prioritize individualism over religious tradition in relation to non-Muslim audiences, these young people also identify as Muslim and want to present a dignified self to Muslim audiences. Research indicates that religious identification and traditions are highly valued among first- and second generation Muslims in Europe (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Rizzo, Miglietta, Gattino & Fedi, 2020). Participating and engaging with religious traditions and practices are important for feelings of social belonging and of being a 'good' Muslim (O'Brien, 2017; Foner & Alba, 2008). As Muslims are a minoritized and vilified group within broader society (O'Brien, 2017; Rizzo et al, 2020), scholars emphasize the importance for in-group members of upholding certain religious group norms and values (Foner & Alba, 2008; Phalet et al, 2013; Rizzo et al, 2020; Ryan, 2014). Indeed, processes of vilification and stigmatization have led to a more self-conscious sense of collective identity for Muslims (Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Modood, 2019), and Muslims can aim to revalorize their stigmatized identity (Lamont, Morning & Mooney, 2002). While young Muslims may aim to maintain a sense of belonging to their Muslim communities, they are confronted with a dominant vision within the broader individualistic context where agency is understood as opposed to religious participation. They

need to negotiate this constructed opposition between individualism and religious identification, while preserving their belonging to their Muslim communities (local and the universal umma). To grasp these processes we explore how they draw on the repertoire of religious individualism.

Religious individualism as an alternative to secular individualism

As already noted, the repertoire of religious individualism enables youth to present cultural templates such as 'personal choice' included within a religious frame, rather than outside of it. Thus, it can provide an alternative to a dominant and often taken-for-granted frame of secularization. This notion relates to sociologists of religion who discern a trend towards a declining importance of religious and normative control, and the concomitant privatization and individualization of religious belief (Dobbelaere, 1999). Scholars refer to an eclective and selective 'bricolage' of religious beliefs and practices (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). Indeed, in contemporary societies, youth can tap into a range of sources to make sense of questions of religious, cultural and social belonging (Hemming & Madge, 2012). Various studies have shown how young Muslims, for instance, express flexibility and creativity towards religious practices and beliefs when managing their religious identification with other (sometimes competing) sets of moral and social norms, cultural expectations and desires (Deeb & Harb, 2013; Jeldtoft, 2012; Ryan, 2014). These studies show how young people attach their own value and importance to particular religious concepts, ideas and practices, and in so doing emphasize flexibility and personal interpretations when renegotiating religious meanings and practices (Hemming & Madge, 2012). In addition, they can regulate their relationship with religion, and manage morals and values that compete with religious values, by expressing an intention to become more religious later in life (Fadil, 2005; Schielke, 2009). This indicates that the construction of religious meaning is in flux during their lives (Deeb & Harb, 2013). These studies emphasize the importance of focusing on 'everyday Islam' (e.g. Deeb & Harb, 2013; Jeldtoft, 2012; Schielke, 2009; Sunier, 2014), and aim to move the focus away from Islamic norms and piety to the everyday lives of Muslims which are not 'all about Islam'.

While the literature on bricolage and everyday Islam enables to emphasize the flexibility of religiosity for Muslim youth, it risks failing to see agency and individualization existing within a religious framework (Fadil, 2005; Fadil & Fernando, 2015). Saba Mahmood (2011) famously argued that feminist and liberal scholars often equate individual agency with resisting religious norms and community, even though social actors are also agentive when embracing religious

practices expected by tradition and communities. Amir-Moazami (2010) observed how respondents express autonomy when choosing religious practices (e.g. veiling) as this counters and challenges dominant cultural norms. Expressing personal interpretations of religious norms can therefore also be understood as engagement within a religious framework and regime of truth (Fadil, 2005; Sunier, 2014). In line with this literature, we argue that more insights are needed into how young Muslims find an identity through Islam, rather than against Islam.

Method

Our analysis uses data gathered through 26 in-depth interviews with Muslim students in the third grade of two secondary schools. The interviews were part of a larger study where, in a three month period (January – March 2019), 40 in-depth interviews were conducted with students from various ethno-religious backgrounds. The first author presented the research in class and students could register to participate. Thereafter, students were randomly selected, taking into account variation in gender, educational track and religious identification.

Participants and context

The sample consists of sixteen girls and ten boys, 16 to 19 years old, who self-identified as Muslim. Fifteen students are of Moroccan descent, nine of Turkish descent, one of Albanian descent and one is Ghanaian-Dutch. Three students were born in Belgium, like their parents, while the other students were born in Belgium while their parents migrated to Belgium.

Respondents were selected from two secondary schools chosen from a previous survey research in seventeen schools, which was part of the research project. Both schools are located in the superdiverse context of Antwerp. The city displays significant cultural and religious diversity (Oosterlynck et al, 2017) and is an example of a majority-minority city in which there is no longer a numerical ethnic majority (Crul, 2016). We believe that this specific research context offers us an analytical advantage in understanding how young Muslims make sense of their (religious) identifications. As these teenagers attend diverse schools, they engage on a daily basis with people from diverse ethno-cultural and religious backgrounds and are confronted with potentially differing expectations from different social networks (Yuval-Davis, 2010; O'Brien, 2017). Research has shown that the city of Antwerp has higher degrees of inequality and more salient religious boundaries than other European cities, partly due to the greater success of right-wing political movements (Phalet et al, 2013). Indeed, research in Belgium, and specifically Antwerp, shows that Muslim youth are more likely to experience discrimination at school than other minorities (Clycq, Nouwen & Vandenbroucke, 2014;

Fleischmann, Phalet & Klein, 2011). A headscarf ban exists in almost all schools (Torrekens, 2015) and teachers tend to have negative attitudes towards the Islamic religiosity of students (Van Praag, Ağirdağ, Stevens & Van Houtte, 2016). Therefore, Antwerp is a good research site to explore identity constructions of Muslim youth and how they negotiate religious boundaries.

Data collection

Our semi-structured interviews (1h30m – 2h) took place at school in a private classroom. First, the researcher asked about the respondent's free time, their reflections on their school career and future ambitions. Second, their religious experience and identifications were discussed and their relations to their family. Third, we discussed their multiple identity constructions and probed into how they perceive themselves and feel perceived by others. Further, we discussed their friendship networks, peer and teacher relations and situations where they felt stigmatized.

Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author who got familiar with the data by reading through the interviews several times. The analysis started by looking at how respondents themselves discussed their religious identity and how they responded to others contesting this identity. From this initial reading, it became clear that most interviewees were drawing from a common repertoire, which aimed to bridge their religious identity with terms from the broader repertoire of individualism. Second, initial codes were created by using open and axial coding (using NVivo). This allowed the researcher to highlight the different elements in this broader repertoire of religious individualism and to categorize interview transcripts according to the relative presence/absence of prevailing elements and themes (e.g. free choice, reflexivity, autonomy). Third, the researcher analysed the data according to the strategies used by the respondents in interactions with significant audiences (parents, teachers, peers).

Researcher's position

It is important to reflect on the position of the researcher who has conducted the interviews, a non-Muslim female researcher without a migration background. Respondents felt the need to explain and educate the researcher (on what it means to be Muslim). This meant that she could probe deeper into how respondents wished to present and negotiate their identities in the conversation. As the respondents could answer in a socially desirable way to avoid stigma, the researcher tried to acknowledge their experiences of stigma and showed she was aware of

dominant racist discourses in Belgium. She presented herself actively as a researcher unaffiliated with the school and acknowledged 'the teacher' as 'the other'. In addition, she expressed her knowledge of youth styles such as clothing, social media and music to build rapport.

Results

We will discuss how young Antwerp Muslims rework the potential tension between individualism and their religious identification. We will argue that a common, yet multifaceted repertoire of religious individualism can be discerned in the conversations with our respondents. This repertoire offers resources for religious individuals to emphasise and express their autonomy and personal choice within a religious frame (O'Brien, 2015). Therefore, it appears to be highly suitable to respond to others contesting their religious identity, and enables respondents to present a dignified self to non-Muslim as well as Muslim audiences.

Experiencing challenges from different audiences

How non-Muslim audiences contest Muslims' agency

First, when conversing with respondents on their religious identification, most of them feel the need to explain that – in light of the problematization of Islam in Belgian society – Islam is misrepresented in the media and public debates.

> *Ahmed: "How do I feel religious? Certainly when they talk about it in the media. Islam is seen as a bad subject, and that is not what it is. So yeah, the religion that I believe in is not the one you see in the media, do you understand? That is important to know."*

The researcher asks Ahmed if he feels this explanation is needed at the beginning of the interview. He elaborates: *"Yes, this is very important, that needs to be explained first. I could also just explain what Islam is but well… if I don't explain it, people will think the wrong way".* Respondents feel the need to get this out of the way before proceeding with the interview, and emphasize *"exhaustion"* for needing to defend their religious identification. These feelings show that contestation and negotiation are actively present in young Muslims' daily lives.

Our analysis focuses on how respondents experience tensions as their religious identification is treated as incompatible with modern individualism. Indeed, the young Muslims we spoke with are used to non-Muslim audiences, such as peers and teachers, questioning their autonomy and agency because of their religious identity. For instance, when I ask Ayoub if he sees himself as religious, he anticipates a possible contestation of his religious stance.

> *Ayoub: "I am religious because I participate in religious practices, such as praying, which I got from my upbringing. I wasn't really obliged to, but just because at the weekend I had classes in the mosque and we learned how to pray. But it really comes from myself; I am not obliged to do this."*

Samira discusses how she faces this tension when her teacher asks about her headscarf.

> *Samira: "I was in my 2nd year of high school. It was an art school and definitely as a girl there you had to 'express' yourself. My teacher saw me with my headscarf outside of school, and later in class, she came to me and asked 'Why do you wear a headscarf'? I thought 'Oh no, what do I answer?' Back then, I wasn't trained in having deep discussions like that about such subjects. You know why you wear it, but people often say that the headscarf is oppressive for girls and I do not want to give her the impression that my parents said that I have to wear it. So, I said 'I wear it because I want to' and she said 'but you have such beautiful hair, why won't you just show it?"*

Samira describes how she is expected to present her 'true self', which she – according to her teacher – cannot do while wearing her headscarf. Therefore, she fears her teacher perceives her as oppressed, thus questioning her agency.

Likewise, non-Muslim peers can contest respondents' religious identification. Salma, for instance, describes the shocked reaction of her non-Muslim friend when she tells her she might wear a headscarf one day.

> *Salma*: *"I said 'I think I want to wear it when I am older' and she said 'Yes but not now right? Because you are really too young? […] I did feel a bit annoyed. That they would think differently about me. If I started wearing the headscarf, would they think 'ooh' 'are you being forced, is this normal'? I am disappointed because I feel like you know me that long and you do know I am still the same person, right?"*

While her friend does not deny Salma's religious identification, she does question the way Salma wishes to express it. Salma is disappointed that her friends would question the 'normality' of her choice and may question 'who she is' when she chooses to engage in religious practices.

Like Salma, Bilal's friends acknowledge his religious identification when they ask him to go out with them and propose that he does not have to drink. When he declines, they attack his religion and his choice as limiting.

Bilal: "My friends asked if I wanted to come to a party and they said that I don't have to drink. I said no and they started saying 'but drinking alcohol is not that bad'. If I say that it is because of my religion that I don't do this, they say 'ugh, it is again because of your religion, in Islam you aren't allowed ANYTHING."

Non-Muslim audiences do not necessarily deny our respondents' religious identification. However, they do seem to question their agency and how respondents choose to practise and express their religious identification.

Presenting a dignified self to Muslim audiences

All respondents perceive themselves as Muslim, and express their religious identification as important to their self-understandings.

Samira: "I see myself as Muslim. I am religious and I'm also brought up like this. This is my way of thinking."

Respondents differ in how and to what extent they express their religious identification and engage in religious practices, experience internal religious feelings and feelings of belonging to their families and Muslim communities.

Zakaria: "I wouldn't say I really follow the rules of my religion, but I definitely see myself as Muslim, that's really important to me."

While respondents aim to rework stigmatization from non-Muslim audiences (as discussed in the previous section), they are also concerned with the risk of jeopardizing feelings of social belonging to their Muslim communities. Indeed, they interact with Muslim audiences, including their peers and families, and want to present a dignified self to them. Take Chaimae, discussed in the introduction of the paper; to negotiate her religious identification in relation to non-Muslim audiences, she takes off her headscarf. However, she wears it sometimes as she still identifies and wants to present herself as Muslim.

Chaimae: "There are probably other people who do not see me as Muslim, because I wear my headscarf sometimes and they would say 'either you wear it, or you don't' and that I am not taking it seriously. But I see myself as Muslim so I am Muslim."

As she aims to manage stigma placed upon her by some non-Muslim audiences, she risks other Muslim audiences questioning her Muslim identification. Indeed, young Muslims must strike a complex balance between different ideas about being a good Muslim. Salma, for instance, mostly hangs out with her Belgian friends. Therefore, she risks being seen as 'too Belgian'.

> *Salma: "I also have Muslim friends, but sometimes I get the comment that I am 'Belgianized' because I mostly hang out with my Belgian friends."*

However, even when engaging in religious practise, these young Muslims can face the risk of stigma, but in the following case the stigma of being seen as 'too extreme'. Some family members of Karani, for example, are afraid of his explicit religious practices and fear he will become a 'Syrian foreign fighter'.

> *Karani: "When I started practicing, rumours among the family started to spread, like 'oh Karani who suddenly practices'. They were a bit afraid that I suddenly would become a warrior."*

In short, Muslim youth have to balance how they present themselves to preserve their religious identification in relation to Muslim peers, family and communities and negotiate the constructed tension between their agency and religious identification in relation to non-Muslim peers, teachers and broader society. Presenting a dignified self to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences requires them to maintain a delicate balance between various audiences - as Ayoub argues *"There is fear of judgement, from both sides, non-Muslims and Muslims"* – urging young people to address and rework these tensions.

Reworking these challenges: enacting a repertoire of religious individualism

In this section, we will discuss four specific ways in which respondents enact the cultural repertoire of religious individualism, allowing respondents to give sense to their multiple belongings and creatively rework their contested religious identification.

Through our interview data, we investigate what elements of the religious individualism repertoire appear most salient when dealing with specific contestations. To be clear, we are not claiming that the different ways of enacting religious individualism constitute clear-cut and separate variants of the broader repertoire. Respondents can creatively draw upon multiple elements of the repertoire simultaneously and these elements can overlap and resonate with each other and, all together, show the multifaceted and flexible nature of this repertoire. Moreover, the findings reveal that the same strategy can even be applied in relation to non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

The personal choice to negotiate or embrace religious norms

Our respondents tend to actively enact a repertoire of religious individualism through emphasizing *personal religious choice*. This firstly refers to the active choice to apply

flexibility to religious norms and practices. Respondents can emphasize the importance of attaching their own meaning to particular ideas and practices in their religious lives (Hemming & Madge, 2012). This is, for instance, discussed by Necip.

> *Necip: "How someone wants to believe, is his/her choice. It is not up to me to tell them 'no if you want to be a Muslim you need to do this and this'. They take what they want from it and I'm not going to decide that what they are doing is wrong, Allah decides this. […] I have a Muslim friend who went out and drank, and that's her choice. I think it is a pity when other people judge her for it, if you judge someone else, you are not being a good Muslim."*

Likewise, Yassine applies flexibility to religious practices when he tries to combine praying with school and hanging out with friends.

> *Yassine: "I pray, but sometimes I skip one or I forget it because you are out late, or you are coming from school or I am out with friends. You know, I am still young, and it is difficult to combine all that stuff. I try to do it as good as possible, but it's ok to not always do it perfectly."*

Thus, to deal with the different social expectations and practical difficulties our respondents defend and value choice and flexibility in the level of religious participation.

Secondly, respondents can express agency by embracing religious practices and norms, while emphasizing their personal choice in doing so (O'Brien, 2015; Mahmood, 2011). This is clearly discussed by Karani, who started praying two years ago and expresses his pride in actively choosing to do so.

> *Karani: "I was born there (Morocco) and I live here (Belgium). That is something that I have no control over. I just have to accept that I am those things; it is not a conscious choice. But, being a Muslim makes me proud because that is something that I took and that is something that I am working on. […] I am proud to have chosen my religion, and that I am making progress over the years."*

Karani emphasizes his individual effort and achievement in religious behaviour, and presents individual autonomy as part of his religious experience. This way of agency is often expressed by girls who embrace wearing the headscarf and emphasize their choice to do so. When Samira in the previous section discusses her conversation with her teacher, she defends her personal choice by stating: *"I wear it because I want it to".* In addition, when embracing religious norms, respondents can resist social norms of the mainstream dominant society. Respondents can critically discuss mainstream practices, which are commonly perceived as 'normal 'or 'youthful' (e.g. drinking alcohol).

Bilal: "My friends think that my parents don't allow me anything e.g. 'he can't go out and he is not allowed to drink and smoke'. But, I am not going to drink or smoke anyway because it's just not good for your body… And that's why the Quran says you shouldn't drink, because you need to treat your body well."

Indeed, religion can inform a critical perspective; Samira, for example, discusses how religion plays an important role when studying history. She learns about important Arabic scholars and therefore calls her history teacher out for discussing one-sided content (e.g. only discussing the Western perspective on history).

Throughout our interview data we have noted that whether respondents emphasize 'personal choice' or not is related to one's societal position. The role of gender turns out to be crucial and merits further analysis. Our female respondents experience greater tensions between their religious identification and individuality. In the dominant perception, their religion is often perceived as restrictive in how it treats female members. They are often seen as victims of social coercion and as suffering from 'false consciousness' (e.g. in thinking they 'choose' the veil) (Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Yeste, Zeguari, Álvarez & Folch, 2020). Female respondents therefore feel the need to defend themselves vis-a-vis broader society, which perceives them as oppressed.

Liliana: "Many people have the image of a Muslim woman who has to keep quiet and has to be submissive. It is mostly people who are really against Islam that say those things. But, I know a lot of Moroccan, Turkish and Albanian Muslim women who aren't submissive. They are very outspoken and they stand up for themselves. But then you have people who keep insisting that Muslim women are not free. But that is just not true."

Female respondents emphasize free will when embracing religious norms and customs such as wearing the headscarf, and thus invoke a feminist discourse within their religious framework, and not in opposition to their religious identification (Fadil, 2005; Mahmood, 2011; Yeste et al, 2020). Chaimae takes her headscarf off to avoid being stigmatized by e.g. a non-Muslim employer. She further elaborates on her actions as a way of presenting herself as not oppressed.

Chaimae: "I also take my headscarf off when it comes to women's rights and when people say 'yeah, Muslim women are oppressed'. I take it off and say 'No we are not oppressed' just to prove them wrong. […] For me, this symbolizes that people should not feel sorry for me, that I can stand up for myself and that I choose for myself what I want and what not!"

AD: "Is this a reaction to non-Muslims?"

Chaimae: "Both, non-Muslims and Muslims."

As Chaimae shows, not only do these girls defend their personal choice in relation to non-Muslims, they can also do so in relation to Muslim audiences. Female respondents report experiences of social control in relation to religious choices. This can be very taxing for these young women as they feel the need to stand up for themselves in relation to other Muslims, while trying not to confirm existing stereotypes on gender inequality in Islam, as Samira explains.

> *Samira: "I feel that the boys in my class are strict towards women, but not towards themselves. Sometimes I have discussions with them about that in class. But really, I often feel this double conflict between these boys with certain views and then the teacher…"*
>
> *AD: "You don't want the teacher to have a bad image of Islam?"*
>
> *Samira: "YEEES, exactly!"*

This preconception of Islam being oppressive for women also creates the image of Muslim men as oppressors. Indeed, Necip argues that Muslim men can be seen as *"someone who beats his wife, or treats her bad, so she can't have a free life. Those preconceptions are quite strong"*. Therefore, our male respondents also felt the need to talk about gender and e.g. Bilal presents himself by saying: *"I am a feminist"*. Respondents need to discuss gender as Ayoub explains to the researcher what Islam is.

> *Ayoub: "I want to say something about men and women. Some people think that women are treated as inferior in Islam, but that is not true. […] You often hear stuff like 'women are oppressed by their man because they need to wear a headscarf' but – maybe it is hard for you to understand or difficult to get the picture – men and women are equal in Islam."*

In conclusion, our respondents express personal choice and agency by either embracing religious tradition and/or by articulating personal interpretations and flexibility within this tradition. Emphasizing personal religious choice in relation to non-Muslim and Muslim audiences is useful for Muslim youth. Respondents can present themselves as agentive and creatively rework the equivalence between religious identification and submission. By doing so, these youths blur a religious symbolic boundary and construct a repertoire of religious individualism where personal choice and autonomy is included within a religious frame. In this way, religion can remain a significant marker of their identity.

Islam of the Heart

While the previous emphasis on personal choice has a strategic and more cognitive nature, respondents can also foreground more affective dimensions of religious individualism. Caitlin Killian (2007) has coined the apt term *Islam of the Heart* to refer to an emotional dimension of religion where believers prioritize what they feel and how they interact with others, rather than what they practise (see also Beaman, 2016).

> *Necip: "I don't think that religion is something you can show by e.g. wearing a headscarf or by praying. If you believe in your heart that you are Muslim, then that is 90% of being religious. The internal feeling is important."*

This strategy is useful for respondents who chose not to practice their religion, but still aim to identify as Muslim. For other respondents, this internalization is pragmatic, helping to fit Islam into mainstream societal expectations and rules.

> *Gullusan: "It is not always that easy to pray 5 times because I am at school for 8 hours. I can't do it always, and occasionally I would say 'I won't pray today because I have too much homework'. Actually, you're not allowed to do that, but it is not my fault, and so the most important thing is what is in your heart and how you act towards others."*

In addition, it allows a person to be less religiously visible and thus avoid stigma, while preserving a perception of oneself as Muslim. Because of Bilal's non-Muslim friends judging him for being religious and e.g. not going out, he tends to internalize and hide his religion, and focus what is in his heart to preserve his self-perception as Muslim.

> *Bilal: "I tend to be discouraged to be involved with religion. That is not something that I want. I don't want to hide my religion from others because they would have prejudiced ideas. I want to be more involved with my religion, but sometimes it is just not possible. For that reason, I am less involved with religion and I pray less. I am more concerned with what the world thinks of Islam and what others think about me."*

While internalization is seen as a desired consequence of secularization in Western Europe, for Muslim youth it is not necessarily a preferred individualization strategy; as Bilal indicates, he does not want to be discouraged from practising his religion. Sarah also shows that she mostly internalizes her religion to avoid being seen as not good enough by other Muslims and to avoid stigma from Non-Muslims.

> *Sarah: "I could talk about my religion with Muslim peers, but I don't dare to. I want to keep it low key for now. Because I am not in the mood to be judged by people. […] With my Belgian*

friends, I can talk about anything, except religion. They just don't understand it and they don't want anything to do with it. I don't want my religion to be the reason for us not to be friends anymore. So I don't show it to them."

Some of our respondents also expressed their religious identity as an 'aspiration', a wish to become better Muslims *"in the future"*, rather than a fixed reality. As most respondents find it difficult to live up to a certain image of what it means to be a 'good' or 'ideal' Muslim, they emphasize taking it "*step by step*" and "*God will appreciate that I am trying my best*".

Yassine: "For now, I just try to do my best and in the future I will work on it […] If you just plan it step by step then eventually you will be the ideal Muslim."

By presenting their religious identity as an aspiration, respondents can give themselves time, flexibility and less pressure in combining various social and cultural belongings. They can emphasize personal growth and gradual development, and present their religious experience as in flux during their lifetime. However, they do indicate that Islam remains an important source of meaning and norms, and an Islam of the heart is a commitment to that meaning system.

Emphasizing the emotional and private dimension of religious individualism allows respondents to internalize Islam to fit within the dominant perception of how religion should be practised (in private), thus avoiding stigma in relation to non-Muslim audiences. Simultaneously, it enables respondents to maintain their Muslim identity and belonging vis-à-vis Muslim audiences. The emotional elements in the repertoire can be enacted in a strategic way to give meaning to their religious belonging within a dominant secularized context.

Reflexive religiosity

A third way in which our respondents emphasized their autonomy and agency within a religious framework, is by stressing the importance of *reflexive religiosity*. As young Muslims grow up in a society where Islam is a chronic object of discussion and debate, there is little space for an unreflective and taken-for-granted identification as Muslim (Brubaker, 2013). Because their religion is contested in public debates, our respondents are urged to consciously reflect on their position and identification as Muslim.

Samira: "There are many questions now about Islam, and suppose someone has 'another' image of Islam and starts asking questions about it, then I would want to give a correct answer and not 'I believe in Islam because I believe in Islam."

In this way, Samira can rebut stigma in relation to non-Muslim audiences by demonstrating reflexivity about her religious choices.

As our respondents cannot assume a taken-for-granted or uncontested Muslim identity, they can hold each other accountable and expect from each other to take a reflexive stance (Brubaker, 2013).

> *Sarah: "Everyone has their own interpretation of religion, but some people keep it really simple. They are always talking about 'that's haram, that's halal', but that is not the essence of Islam. You have to think about it, you need to understand the content and you have to know what it's about."*

In line with the element of personal choice, respondents strategically use the idea of reflexive religiosity vis-a-vis both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. Respondents present themselves as reflexive within their religious framework, thus using a repertoire of religious individualism to contribute to the blurring of the constructed religious symbolic boundary.

Destigmatizing Islam: 'This is not Islam'

In the beginning of our analysis, we highlighted how Ahmed wished to set the record straight concerning the 'wrong' image of Islam. As Islam is often associated with negative traits such as gender inequality, social coercion and external authority and seen as opposite from modern individualism, respondents feel the need to *destigmatize Islam*. By disassociating Islam from these negative traits, respondents enact a more positive image of Islam - *"this is not Islam"* - and relate the negative traits to ethnic and cultural practices, while distancing themselves from the latter.

> *Chaimae: "Moroccan culture, that's not my thing, but I am Muslim. I think that some people wrongfully see Moroccan culture as religion. For example, if women aren't treated fairly, that's something you see in cultures and not in religion itself. I do not distance myself from everything from Moroccan culture because some things are good, but I do distance myself from the unfair stuff. […] I think it is really sad when other people think women are inferior in Islam. Many people think it's the religion, and that's a shame. That is not Islam."*

By distinguishing between their religious identity and traditional or cultural practices, they employ Islam to avoid stigma and counter anti-Islamic stereotypes (because 'this is not Islam') (Ryan, 2014; Synnes, 2018; Fadil, 2005). In case of gender equality issues, Islam is also used to emphasize equality and associate unfair treatment of girls with traditional culture.

Respondents thus creatively draw on elements of moral individualism (e.g. equality) within their religious frame, and in doing so use the repertoire of religious individualism as a way out of stigma. Although this way of employing the repertoire shifts the symbolic boundary from a religious boundary towards ethnic and cultural boundaries, it also allows a more nuanced view on Muslim religious identity, which is often viewed by others as inextricably linked with traditional culture.

Discussion and conclusion

We have analysed how young Muslims make sense of experienced tensions between their religious identification and a broader dominant and normative cultural framework of individualism. As our results show, young Muslims are confronted with non-Muslim audiences questioning their individual autonomy and agency due to their religious identification. In the dominant perception, agency is perceived in opposition to religious tradition (Fadil, 2005; Fadil & Fernando, 2015; O'Brien, 2015; Mahmood, 2011). Therefore, young Muslims have to relate to a society that only perceives them as agentive when they adapt to the mainstream definition of how religious identification should be expressed (e.g. not wearing a headscarf, praying in private, etc.). However, as our respondents consciously identify and present themselves as Muslim, they aim to maintain their social belonging in relation to Muslim audiences (Fadil, 2005; O'Brien, 2015). They want to present a dignified self to both non-Muslim and Muslim audiences and hence construct and perform their own definitions of agency, which do not contradict their religious identification.

In general, we can conclude that the broader contestation of their religious identification prompts various responses among Muslim youth to rework these tensions. In our analysis, we look at how these youths creatively employ four, partly overlapping, key ideas of the cultural repertoire of religious individualism: emphasizing personal religious choice, an Islam of the Heart, reflexive religiosity, and the disassociation of religion from traditionalist culture. Thinking about religious individualism as a multifaceted and flexible cultural repertoire, helps us to appreciate how our young respondents creatively select and combine elements of this repertoire in their everyday life.

While dominant groups can impose their representations of individualism as mainly secular-liberal, our analysis shows that young Muslims use various elements - personal religious choice, reflexive religiosity, emotional and internal feelings and moral individualism - to express individuality within a religious meaning system. Our analysis contributes to the

understanding of agency not only as applying personal interpretations and flexibility in relation to religious norms and expectations (Hemming & Madge, 2012), but also as a way of expressing choice in embracing religious norms (Fadil & Fernando, 2015; Mahmood, 2011). Thus, this shows that young Muslims may equally construct their own definitions of individualism and that this offers tools to emphasize and present their agency and autonomy in being religious (O'Brien, 2015). The repertoire of religious individualism blurs the constructed tensions between religious identification and individualism, and enables young Muslims to belong to a broader individualistic society while preserving religion as a significant marker of their identity and maintaining their engagement with their religious identification and communities (Amir-Moazami, 2010; Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Fadil, 2005; O'Brien, 2015). In addition, it provides an alternative for a dominant and normative belief where religion is opposed to individual traits such as personal choice, and thus challenges a taken-for-granted belief on the privatized role of religion in Western society.

Further, our analysis shows that young Muslims employ various elements of religious individualism (e.g. Islam of the Heart, reflexive and self-conscious choices, 'this is not Islam') to avoid stigma, while preserving their status as good Muslims and their religious belonging. This within a context of general processes of secularization and privatization of religion in Western European societies (Sunier, 2014). Religion is generally expected to be private, and specifically Islam is targeted as it is highly problematized in Western European societies (Fadil, El Asri & Bracke, 2014).

Furthermore, we have highlighted how presenting a dignified self to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences is more taxing for female respondents. In Western Europe, Islam is often perceived as opposite to gender equality (Fadil, El Asri & Bracke, 2014). Therefore, Muslim girls – definitely those who wear the headscarf – need to demonstrate individualism, which involves being in control of their own lives and choices (Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Mahmood, 2011; Rizzo et al, 2020). While aiming to blur the constructed tension between personal choice and their religious identification, Muslim girls also experience opposition from Muslim audiences. Scholars argue that women in general often experience a higher degree of social control and pressure to conform to social norms (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1989; Van Kerckem, Van De Putte & Stevens, 2013). This is related to the symbolic role of women as 'designated keepers of culture' of collective cultural and religious identities (Amir-Moazami, 2010; Van Kerckem, Van De Putte & Stevens, 2013). Yet, our analysis shows that efforts to achieve equality do not have to take place outside of religious frameworks: these young girls - as well

as boys - challenge gender norms in relation to non-Muslims and Muslim audiences without compromising their religious identification.

With our findings, we aim to emphasize the broader implications for policy makers, teachers and school officials. Our results demonstrate how complex it is for young Muslims in a West European context to negotiate their multiple identifications. As their agency and autonomy are overlooked and questioned, young Muslims must, every day, carry out difficult boundary work. This is definitely the case in school contexts, where these young people spend most of their time and interact with non-Muslim teachers and peers. To support these young Muslims in their identification processes, it is imperative for e.g. teachers to recognize their expressions of agency, reflexivity and individuality and acknowledge that these do not contradict their religious identities, which can remain an important part of how they present themselves.

To conclude we shortly reflect on the limitations of our findings, which need to be understood within a West European context and clearly reflect the ambiguous social situation of young Muslims in a superdiverse urban setting. We expect that research in other settings and among other stigmatized religious minorities could yield other results. Our findings also point to the research possibilities of using in-depth interviews to better explore the tensions young Muslims experience in their everyday life and how they address these tensions. Yet, we acknowledge that drawing on cultural repertoires in artificial interview settings does not necessarily provide insight into how youngsters deal with their religious identity in concrete, real-life, institutional situations. We expect that ethnographical research is more suited to shed light on how young Muslims - in practise - interact with various audiences.

Chapter 8

In search of a cool identity: how young people negotiate religious and ethnic boundaries in a superdiverse context

Published in *Ethnicities*[12]

With Clycq & Verschraegen

In this paper, we aim to study how young people navigate a superdiverse majority-minority context, and how they negotiate bright religious and ethnic symbolic boundaries. Our study is based on 40 in-depth interviews with young people from various ethnic, social and religious backgrounds in the superdiverse city of Antwerp. Our analysis shows that young people generally draw on a cultural repertoire of commonplace diversity to navigate various peer relations and present diversity as a normal element of everyday life. However, our analysis also shows how ethnic minority youth experience bright ethnic and religious boundaries and need to navigate social exclusion processes. While minority youth rework bright boundaries by inverting their othered position and redefining coolness through a repertoire of ethnic hybridity, white majority youth face new challenges as their previously taken-for-granted dominant position becomes questioned and contested within a superdiverse setting. Our analysis shows how white majority youth manage their changing social position by drawing upon cultural repertoires of ethnic purity and 'normal' youthfulness, yet this also raises the question of whether they can draw on cultural repertoires, which do not imply nativist white identity politics.

Introduction

Zoë is a 19-year old white, non-religious Belgian-Flemish girl who is just finishing her last year of secondary education in a school in Antwerp, Belgium's second biggest and superdiverse city. When interviewing her the researcher asks how she experiences this diversity in her everyday life. Zoë explains that she has diverse peer groups and emphasizes she *"gets along with everyone"* and is *"open and willing to learn about every culture".* Zoe's answer is in line with the often-expressed idea that in superdiverse cities, characterised by an extraordinary varied cultural mélange, this diversity is being experienced as 'commonplace ' or as a normal part of social life (e.g. Gidley, 2013; Wessendorf, 2014). Yet, our interview with Zoë also shows that the situation is more complex. While Zoë is *"so happy"* to be able to

[12] Driezen, A., Clycq, N., & Verschraegen, G. (2022). In search of a cool identity: how young people negotiate religious and ethnic boundaries in a superdiverse context. *Ethnicities*, *23*(1), 3-25.

navigate between various friendship groups, she also expresses group boundaries along ethnic and religious lines between her friendship groups. To illustrate this, she gives the example of organizing two different birthday parties, one for her *"native Belgian friends"* and one for her *"foreigner friends"*. She also stresses that *"when I look at my friends who are Muslim, I think 'poor you'. Because they are limited in their way of thinking. I think if they didn't have their religion, that they would be able to form their own opinion."* In comparison, she sees herself as *"creative in my way of thinking"*. She explicitly relates 'traits' such as 'autonomy' and 'creativity' to her Belgian-Flemish, non-religious, white identity (and peers), which is still the dominant and mostly taken-for-granted and normative majority identity in Belgian society. However, she also discusses how in the super diverse city of Antwerp this dominant and normative majority identity does not remain uncontested. White students are referred to by minority and majority students as *"tattas"* or *"flamands"*. Respondents explain that 'tatta' is a label used to describe *"real Belgians"* who are *"used to nothing"* and *"are the white children, who have money, who have it too good, for whom life is easy and who are ignorant about other cultures".* The term 'tatta' is then used both by minority and majority students to criticize and question the taken-for-granted, normative and privileged position of white majority youth, and to negotiate the othered position of minority youth.

Seemingly contradictory quotes like these encouraged us to further explore how young people negotiate group boundaries within superdiverse majority-minority cities. Like many other cities over the world, the Belgian city Antwerp – where the current study has been conducted – has become a majority-minority city, where there is no longer a dominant numerical ethnic, religious or racial majority group (Oosterlynck et al, 2017; Crul, 2016). To capture such processes of demographic and cultural diversification, and the rather complex social situation that emerges from it, the notion of superdiversity has been coined (Vertovec, 2007). It is often presented as challenging approaches in migration studies and ethnic studies which use an "ethno-focal lens" as it calls for more attention to "the conjunction of ethnicity with a range of other variables" such as gender, religion, social class, sexual orientation, age, and language (Vertovec, 2007, p.1025; see also Foner et al, 2019).

While the notion of superdiversity brings a new perspective to familiar issues of group formation, we still know relatively little about "how superdiversity unfolds and operates in concrete everyday relations and interactions in a variety of settings" (Foner et al, 2019, p.2). Furthermore, there is a paucity of research into how young people experience and navigate a social environment which is significantly more diverse than that in which their parents came

of age (Kostet, Verschraegen & Clycq, 2021; Maene, Van Rossem & Stevens, 2021; Tran, 2019). Hence, to better understand how superdiversity operates in the everyday relations of youth, this paper investigates how young people from different ethno-racial and religious groups navigate and give meaning to their diverse peer relations. We do this by analysing the cultural repertoires on which young people draw to negotiate and rework bright ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries (Fleming et al, 2012; Lamont et al, 2016; Ryan, 2011). Our study is based on 40 in-depth interviews with young people from various ethnic, social and religious backgrounds, aged between 16 and 19, in the third grade of two secondary schools, in the superdiverse city of Antwerp.

Our analysis will focus both on how youth from different ethnic and religious minorities navigate a superdiverse social environment, as well as on the responses of young people from long-established ethno-racial and religious groups. While considerable attention has been paid in the literature to coping strategies of ethnic and religious minorities (e.g. Lamont et al, 2016), less attention has been directed to how ethnic majority groups have become a numerical minority in superdiverse cities and how they deal with this loss or change of social status. We will first analyse how minoritized youth are confronted with othering and social exclusion, and how they challenge dominant repertoires about race, ethnicity and religion by inverting their othered identities. By questioning existing power relations and demanding equal recognition, these minority young people are arguably contributing to new cultural repertoires emphasizing non-discrimination and the empowerment of the socially and culturally disadvantaged.

In a second step we will analyse how this societal transformation requires white majority groups to position themselves in relation to these new cultural repertoires. For decades, it has been self-evident that the ethnic majority group could, through its policy makers and societal institutions, ask ethnic and religious minorities and migrants to ‘integrate’ or ‘assimilate’ into the mainstream. However, in superdiverse cities, where the dominant majority has itself become a numerical minority, stronger bottom-up movements urge former ethnic majority groups to adjust to the new diverse social realities and recognize minoritized voices and their demands for change. This development raises urgent questions as to how white majority young people make sense of their changed position and integrate into these diverse majority-minority settings (Crul, 2016; Maene et al, 2021).

Making sense of diversity: cultural repertoires and symbolic boundaries

In recent years, processes of diversification have encouraged scholars to rethink assimilation, acculturation and integration theories (Alba & Duyvendak, 2019; Crul, 2016; 2018; Jiménez, 2017, 2018; Maene et al, 2021). While in the past the 'national imagination' was often the dominant guiding narrative and cultural repertoire for organizing society and its institutions, in superdiverse cities, relying upon a narrowly defined 'national imagination' may be less relevant, and even problematic. To capture the new and multiple ways in which our urban youth respondents make sense of the superdiversity around them, this study will analyse the 'cultural repertoires' (Swidler, 1986) on which young people draw to negotiate ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Small et al, 2010). Cultural sociologists have defined 'cultural repertoires' as the available schemas, frames, narratives, and scripts that actors draw on to make sense of a particular situation (Swidler, 1986). These cultural repertoires are made available to individuals through the education system, media, but also through socialization processes in the family and peer groups (Grusec & Hastings, 2014). Yet, repertoires are not just 'passively' transmitted, but actively used, and sometimes reworked; they are commonly seen as 'sets of tools' which people can draw on to manage their social world (Swidler, 1986). The idea of a 'toolkit' highlights the non-deterministic character of cultural repertoires which enable and constrain rather than prescribe individuals' patterns of thought and behaviour. This means that young people can actively draw on various (elements of) repertoires, and creatively combine them, to make sense of a particular situation. Furthermore, since different young people are socialized in different cultural environments, they do not have the same set of – or the same access to - repertoires. Ethnic minority youth, for instance, have a different array of repertoires of action from ethnic majority youth and therefore have other ways to manage situations of difference and diversity. Previous research showed, for instance, that ethnic minorities are more likely to use universalist cultural repertoires to justify their claims to equality, which includes pointing to common characteristics as "children of God," or to the universality of human nature (e.g. Lamont & Fleming, 2005). Other research showed that experiences of racism and discrimination have an impact not only on the repertoires minority youth have access to, but also how they make use of, or relate themselves to, e.g. dominant (white) identities in society (Kostet et al, 2021). Even if certain repertoires and tools are available to youth, the relation with these repertoires might differ for different groups depending on their social location. Hence, the concept of cultural

repertoires emphasizes the heterogeneity of cultural tools and the varying availability of these tools between different groups such as those defined by ethnicity, gender, class or age.

This also connects the concept of cultural repertoires with the concept of symbolic boundaries. The meanings individuals derive from existing repertoires enable them to (symbolically) include or exclude others from their group (in whatever terms this group might be defined) but also allow them to attach (more or less) value and moral worth to others (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Small et al, 2010). While the symbolic boundary-making (or 'boundary-drawing') approach has been used across a wide range of topics and disciplines (see Lamont et al, 2015), we employ it here to analyse how young people draw group boundaries and construct a dignified group identity for themselves by making implicit or explicit comparisons with other young people. By distinguishing 'people like us' from 'people like them' young people draw symbolic boundaries between groups and orient themselves in their superdiverse social environment. Symbolic boundaries are changeable and can vary in strength and clarity. In some contexts, social groups can be neatly demarcated, and members easily classified (*bright* boundaries), while in other cases group boundaries are fluid and contested, allowing individuals to switch between groups (*blurred* boundaries). Thus the distinction between bright and blurred boundaries is not static: a bright boundary can get blurred, and vice versa (Alba, 2005; Wimmer, 2013). The concept of symbolic boundary making also allows us to draw attention to multiple dimensions of difference (e.g. ethnic, religious or class differences). While symbolic group boundaries are social constructions that can be changed through processes of interaction, previous research has shown that the group membership created by symbolic boundary work, over time, can become highly consequential (Wimmer, 2013; Lamont et al, 2015). When boundary-making processes persist through time and involve cultural and social hierarchies, symbolic boundaries can reinforce social (material) boundaries, normalizing who is within or outside a group through legitimization or stigmatization (Lamont et al, 2016).

It is hence important to investigate whether and how young people can redraw group boundaries to demonstrate their own (and potentially others') moral worth. This is in line with previous research such as Khabeer's study (2016) on how Muslim youth in the US construct a Muslim cool identity to oppose and confront a racial hierarchy, and with Herding's study (2014) on youth cultures and constructions of a Muslim cool identity among youth in Western Europe. Vasquez and Wetzel (2009) argue that racial minorities (Mexican Americans and Potawatomi Indians) emphasize ethnic authenticity, providing them with opportunities to re-

evaluate their group's status and invert stigmatization, which is a strategy that has also been identified among Muslim youth in Europe (Simsek, Tubergen, Fleischmann, 2022).

Young people navigating superdiverse societies

Generally, two main trends seem to be emerging in superdiverse contexts. Some scholars see a 'commonplace' approach towards diversity, where diversity is experienced and perceived as a normal part of social life (Wessendorf, 2014). Youth from various backgrounds feel at ease with superdiversity and are able to navigate such contexts without many difficulties. Researchers show how, for example, children in superdiverse schools tap into cultural repertoires where diversity is discussed as a commonplace and self-evident element of everyday life (Kostet et al, 2021; Wessendorf, 2016).

Yet, at the same time the widespread use of the term 'superdiversity' should not make forget that there is a broad variety in how people, including urban youth, perceive and practise diversity (Seays et al, 2017). One cannot overlook, for instance, the massive support for extreme-right social and political movements across the world, also among youth in superdiverse cities (Miller-Idriss, 2018). This is leading to an enduring stigmatization, discrimination and marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities across Europe (Barwick & Beaman, 2019; Beaman, 2017; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Trittler, 2019). Researchers argue that this is, among other things, due to the enduring salience of ethnic and religious boundaries, often marked by structural inequalities (Albeda et al, 2018; Trittler, 2019). In some cases, this even leads to (re-)emerging repertoires on 'reclaiming society' from a white perspective and claims that there is a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural and mono-religious core to European societies (Crul 2018; Sadeghi, 2019). Indeed, (sub)national identities continue to be (more often than not) defined in quite mono-cultural and exclusive ways, only minimally recognizing minorities' equal place in society (Crul, 2018).

By analysing how young people use and rework certain cultural repertoires to negotiate symbolic boundaries between peer groups, while at the same time using repertoires to negotiate their own (and potentially others') moral worth, we aim to provide more in-depth empirical insights into how urban youth re-imagine their social identity in a superdiverse majority-minority setting. Doing so, we contribute not only to literature on how ethnic minority youth negotiate and manage their minority status (e.g. Fleming et al, 2012; Herding, 2014; Lamont et al, 2016; Phalet et al, 2013), but also to the more recent literature on ethnic majority youth (e.g. Crul, 2018; Kraus & Crul, 2022).

Method

We draw upon 40 one-on-one in-depth interviews with students in the third grade of two secondary schools. The interviews were conducted between January and March 2019. The first author presented the research in class and students could register to participate. Thereafter, students were randomly selected, taking into account variations in gender, educational track, ethnic background and religious identification. The names of the respondents are anonymized throughout the article.

Participants and research context

The sample consists of 25 girls and 15 boys, 16-19 years old. All respondents expressed multiple and intersecting identifications and students were from various ethnic, religious and educational backgrounds. We selected students in two secondary schools in the superdiverse city of Antwerp. Antwerp displays a high degree of cultural and religious diversity (Oosterlynck et al, 2017) and is an example of a majority-minority city (Crul, 2016). As 29.6% of children and young people aged 10-19 have no migration background[13] in Antwerp, youth regularly engage with people from diverse ethno-cultural, social and religious backgrounds. Although research indicates an acceptance of these diverse settings (e.g. Albeda et al, 2018), particularly research in Antwerp has indicated salient and strong ethno-religious boundaries (e.g. Albeda et al, 2018; Driezen et al, 2020; Phalet et al, 2013), partly due to the greater success of right-wing political movements and anti-immigration discourses. Indeed, research in Flanders demonstrates the continuing presence of discrimination based on racial, religious and linguistic markers, e.g. in educational settings (Bourabain et al, 2020; Van Praag et al, 2016; Vervaet et al, 2016). Therefore, Antwerp is an important research site for analysing and understanding how young people experience and negotiate group boundaries in a superdiverse setting.

Two secondary schools were selected from a previous survey in seventeen schools, which was part of the research project. School 1 is located in the city centre in the superdiverse neighbourhood of Antwerpen-Noord. This neighbourhood consists of 70% inhabitants with a

[13] In Belgium migration background is commonly used to refer to individuals that migrated themselves to Belgium or whose (grand)parents migrated. Given the enduring large inequalities between ethnic minority and migrant groups in education, labour market, and housing, it remains important to collect these data.

migration background (*Stad in cijfers*, 2019). School 2 is located in the centre of the residential neighbourhood of Wilrijk. This neighbourhood consists of 31.1% inhabitants with a migration background (*Stad in cijfers*, 2019). The schools had differing ethnic compositions, measured by the home language of the students. School 1 has 73.5% of students with another home language next to Dutch. School 2 has 14.2% of students with another home language next to Dutch (Agodi, 2019). However, these numbers do not present the respondents' overall experience and perception of diversity. School 1 was often described by respondents and teachers as a school *"without Belgian 'native' students" and with 70 different nationalities*" and school 2 was often described as a *"fifty-fifty"* school.

Data collection

Our semi-structured interviews (1h30m – 2h) took place at school in a private classroom. The researcher asked about the respondents' free time, their reflections on their school career and future ambitions. Further, their multiple identity constructions were discussed and how young people perceive themselves and feel perceived by others. The researcher probed into respondents' friendship networks, peer and teacher relations, how they negotiate various friendship groups at school and how they experienced and negotiated group boundaries. We asked questions such as:

- How has your school career been?
- Who are your circle of friends (inside and outside of school)?
- With whom do you like to hang out? With whom do you feel most or less comfortable?
- Respondents get an exercise where they place various social identities in a circle around them: how do you identify? What do these identities mean to you? How do others perceive you?
- Do you have an experience where you felt unfairly treated by teachers? Have you seen others being unfairly treated by teachers?

Data analysis

Conducting the interviews, analysing the data and constructing interview questions were done in a cyclical process. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author, who became familiar with the data by reading through the interviews several times. Initial codes were then created by using open and axial coding (using NVivo).

Our analysis paid close attention to how our respondents drew symbolic boundaries and used specific cultural repertoires. Following grounded theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006) we coded inductively to detect what types of repertoires and boundary-making emerged from the analysis. The analysis started by understanding how respondents themselves discussed their multiple identifications and belongings, and their discussions of their friendship networks and how they relate to other peers at their school. From this initial reading, it became clear that although respondents discussed the normality of their superdiverse school setting and peer relations, group boundaries along ethnic and religious lines emerged as bright; young people discussed various ways in which they rework and negotiate symbolic boundaries. Codes such as coolness, pureness, hybridity, reverse racism, identity threat, etc. emerged from analysing the interviews and we returned to the literature on these concepts to further understand the cultural tools or repertoires our respondents draw to negotiate group boundaries. In our previous work on religious identity and religious individualism among youth, we discuss other codes that emerged from the data such as free choice, reflectivity and autonomy (Driezen et al, 2021).

Researcher's position

It is important to reflect on the position of the researcher who has conducted the interviews, a white female researcher without a migration background.

The researcher tried to be attentive of the unequal power relationship between her and her conversation partners who are part of a minoritized group. First, she tried to establish a safe(r) space where she acknowledged that she is unable to take on a 'neutral' as well as an insider position. However, she assured the respondents that their opinions, experiences and stories count and that she was there to listen to their stories. Second, she aimed to construct perceived similarities and gain an independent position (Beaman, 2017) by clearly distinguishing herself from teachers and the school. As she is young herself, the researcher and respondents could talk in informal conversations prior to the interview about youth culture such as music, clothing, social media, etc. As the researcher is also brought up and lives in Antwerp, she is familiar with the dialect and words used by the respondents. Third, throughout the conversation, when respondents discussed experiences of othering and discrimination, the researcher explicitly expressed she is aware of racist discourses in Belgium and specifically Antwerp, and acknowledged their feelings and experiences. This allowed her to pay attention to how symbolic boundaries are constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and

interviewee. For example, when she asked one of the respondents (from a minoritized group) what identifications were important to him, he said he identified as Belgian, but then stopped himself and said *"I'm not sure if I am able to say that, do you think I am Belgian?"*. By asking who is part of the dominant white majority group, he probed the researcher to acknowledge his belonging to the dominant group. Another respondent told the researcher how she felt unable to express her experiences and viewpoints to e.g. her white teachers, pointing out the unequal power relationship between them (Vähäsantanen & Saarinen, 2013). However, this also indicated the established trust and openness between the interviewer and interviewee. Lastly, at the end of the interview, the researcher made sure to have time left to talk about the interview off record and make sure if respondents had felt comfortable.

Furthermore, in relation to respondents that are part of the dominant white majority group the researcher was perceived as an 'insider'. Respondents seemed better able to use, for example, discourses of identity threat and reverse racism, with the expectation that the researcher understood where they were coming from. The researcher often had to probe into the answers of respondents, as they frequently responded with 'taken-for-granted' answers, e.g. *"you know what I mean"*. The same strategies as discussed before (establishing a safe(r) space, informal conversations, etc.) were also applied in these conversations.

Results

We first discuss how our respondents navigate a superdiverse context by applying a cultural repertoire of commonplace diversity. We also pay attention to how some of our respondents experience clear group boundaries along ethnic and religious lines, and how minority youth need to navigate othering and social exclusion processes e.g. in the school environment. Second, we discuss how youth construct a cool identity to negotiate and rework bright ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries. Strikingly, while majority youth construct and claim a cool identity based on repertoires on ethnic purity and youthfulness, minority youth rework bright boundaries through a repertoire of ethnic hybridity, hence inverting their othered position and re-evaluating what it means to be cool. Subsequently, our analysis shows how white majority youth face new challenges as their previously taken-for-granted dominant position becomes questioned and contested within a superdiverse setting, and how it seems they lack cultural tools to negotiate their contested identity.

Navigating a superdiverse city and school context: common place diversity and experiences of social exclusion

"This is just normal" – a cultural repertoire on commonplace diversity

How do youth navigate peer relations and everyday interactions within a superdiverse context? Most respondents, as illustrated by Mauro's account, draw on a cultural repertoire of commonplace diversity (Albeda et al, 2018; Kostet et al, 2021; Wessendorf, 2014).

> *Mauro (ethnic majority, school 2): "I get along with everyone. Surinamese, Turks, Moroccans, Belgians, it doesn't matter. If you can laugh together and you get along, we can be friends. My best friend has another religion than me, comes from another country and has another skin colour, but we aren't concerned with that stuff. We just talk about the same stuff, such as school, music and the environment. […] We are brought up with Moroccans, Muslims… in class. Just let that be. Society is going to find it normal that there are different cultures and religions. The younger generations grow up with different cultures together and we find it normal. My father, to be honest, he votes for Vlaams Belang[14]. But I don't of course, because I have friends from different cultures and I'm more realistic than my father."*

Mauro points out how religious and ethnic diversity is experienced as a normal and realistic part of social life. Many respondents express this normalcy of their peer groups, as well as their school and city, being superdiverse. Not only do respondents stress this normalcy, they also state that it is "*cool"* to have superdiverse friendship groups.

> *Samira (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): "Of course there are various cliques, but in these groups, there is a lot of diversity. For example, in my own group there is a Belgian, a Moroccan, an Algerian… there is a lot of variation and that's cool."*

Generally, respondents will express an appreciation of these superdiverse environments (Albeda et al, 2018; Jiménez, 2017) and describe it as something good, interesting, normal, cool and a *"sign of the times"*. Thus, our respondents navigate a superdiverse context by using a repertoire on commonplace diversity to blur group boundaries. However, while bright symbolic boundaries might at first seem absent in the lives of young people, the following section shows how bright ethnic and religious boundaries emerge when young people navigate their peer relations and school environment.

[14]Extreme right-wing populist party with anti-immigrant policy viewpoints.

"I do feel a bit excluded" - experiences of group boundaries and social exclusion at school

While most respondents evaluate their superdiverse environments positively, they also describe the existence of group boundaries, which manifests itself in *"cliques"* and social closure of friendship groups, along ethnic, religious or social[15] lines.

> *Robbe (ethnic majority, school 2): "I don't know if it's a coincidence but all of my friends are Belgian. But I do think that I can get along with people from another culture, it's not that I act differently towards them. But it is often that they are standing together, and that the Belgian boys are standing together [at the playground]."*

Robbe continues by explaining he feels more comfortable in a friend group with whom he shares a similar ethnic background, without evaluating his friend group as better than the other. Zoë (ethnic majority), on the other hand, does have diverse friendship groups. She navigates between two separate groups where one is described as her *"Belgian native friends"* and the other as *"the foreigners group"* (she feels a bit uneasy describing groups like that). She switches her self-presentation according to her friend group and the activities they do. With her 'Belgian' group she drinks alcohol as part of the fun they have, while with her 'foreigner' group she watches movies and *"goofs around"* (but the group doesn't consume alcohol). While she expresses she *"gets along with everyone"*, she does indicate hereby clear group boundaries. As expressed in the introduction of this paper, she does seem to value her identity as white-Flemish and non-religious as 'better' than the identity of her Muslim friends, by indicating that they are *"not free in their thinking"*.

Respondents who are part of a minoritized group also discuss how they experience group boundaries and observe social closure of groups.

> *Samira (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): "In my previous school, I had this feeling that the 'autochtonen' consciously didn't hang out with the 'allochtonen', I don't know why. We, the 'allochtonen', just got along with everyone and we were just laughing and stuff, but I felt that the 'autochtonen' weren't involved with us. They separated themselves from us. But why? Were we too social? Too loud?"*

Both majority and minority young people often describe minority youth as *"foreigners"*, *"allochtonen"* and the *"others"*, while youth from the dominant majority group are referred to as *"autochtonen"* or *"natives"*. Here, Samira wonders why 'autochtonen' (dominant white

[15]Referring to friend groups in different educational tracks: ASO (academic), TSO (technical) and BSO (vocational). For this paper, we have chosen to focus on ethnic and religious diversity.

majority youth) do not want to hang out with 'allochtonen' (youth with a migration background) and expresses a 'we' vs. 'them'. Other respondents discuss how they feel possibly socially excluded based on their ethnic or religious identity when navigating their peer groups.

> *Sarah (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): "I have my friend group from my previous school who are mostly non-religious, and I have my friend group here at school [who are mostly Muslims]. I don't talk too much about my religion with my non-religious friends, because they don't understand it, they try to understand it, but I don't want religion to be the reason we can't be friends anymore so I try to hide it a little bit."*

Similar to other respondents, Sarah switches her self-presentation according to her friendship groups and hides her religious identity with her non-religious friends, in fear of being excluded from the group. Likewise, Bilal discusses how his non-Muslim friends go out an drink, and respond to him negatively when he does not want to participate. He worries that his friends, because of his Muslim identity, would not invite him anymore and therefore remains silent on his religion.

> *Bilal (ethnic and religious minority, school 2): "I don't talk about my religion too much with them because I don't want them to think 'he is probably not allowed anything, so we won't invite him anymore'. I do feel a bit excluded by my friends."*

Not only do minoritized youth experience (possible) social exclusion from friends, they can also experience othering due to being treated unfairly by their teachers in comparison to students who are part of a dominant white majority.

> *Tijs (ethnic majority, school 2): "I think teachers underestimate Moroccan and Muslim students more than Belgian students. They are also punished harder when they do something wrong. […] In class, we had pulled the plugs on the computers [as a joke]. The teacher didn't even look at me. At that moment you do notice 'ah, they only look at the allochtonen'."*

Tijs notices he is treated better by teachers than other boys of his class. Liliana points out then that it is more comfortable to hang out with other minoritized students, as she feels they share the same experiences of discrimination.

> *Liliana (ethnic and religious minority, school 2): "At school I tend to hang out more with the 'allochtonen' than with the Belgian people. Just because we understand what it is to be discriminated against [e.g. by teachers]."*

Looking at the various quotes of our respondents, it is clear that their experiences differ according to their school context. Robbe, Tijs, Bilal and Liliana (school 2) indicate clear group

boundaries within their school, which is described as a *"50-50"* school (referring to the percentage of students without and with a migration background). Most of them remain during their whole school career in that school. Samira and Sarah (school 1), on the other hand, mostly reflect on experiences of social exclusion and tensions between groups in their previous schools. Their school is described as a school *"without Belgian 'native' students" and with 70 different nationalities"*. Therefore, some of the respondents belief there is less discrimination by teachers, and therefore less tensions between students.

> *Ahmed (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): [about his relation with this teachers] "There is no discrimination at this school. At another school, they would perceive a Muslim differently. But not here, because there are so many different cultures."*

In addition, this school 1 is characterized by large numbers of students coming from other schools. Most of the respondents therefore reflect on experiences in their previous schools and discuss bright group boundaries along ethnic and religious lines, relatable to how Bilal, Liliana, etc. talk about group boundaries within their school.

Thus, our respondents navigate their superdiverse context by on the one hand emphasizing a repertoire of commonplace diversity and thus blurring group boundaries. However, on the other hand, bright ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries emerge, which varies according to different school contexts, where minoritized youth feel 'othered' and socially excluded.

Constructing a cool identity: negotiating and reworking symbolic boundaries

In the previous section, superdiversity and having friends of various background was already referred to as *"cool"*. Coolness is an important identity among young people for navigating their social relations (Bucholtz, 2010). Indeed, all respondents shared the desire to be perceived as cool by their peers. In this section, we will discuss how ethnic and religious boundaries also emerge as bright when it comes to constructing coolness and claiming a cool identity, and how our respondents participate in boundary work to maintain, rework and negotiate group boundaries.

Maintaining a dominant position: repertoires on ethnic purity and youthfulness among majority youth

How do majority youth navigate a majority-minority context, where they are numerically not the majority anymore? On the one hand, our respondents' identities and positions remain often taken-for-granted, unquestioned and uncontested.

AD: "What does it mean to you to be Belgian and Flemish?"

Robbe (ethnic majority, school 2): "Actually nothing. That's what I am, but it doesn't really matter to me. I don't necessarily feel Belgian."

Robbe described a 'nothingness' when it comes to discussing his ethnic identity and does not express a particular emotion related to it. As his identity is the dominant norm, he does not have to justify or explain it, and thus never has to say he is 'ethnic' (Perry, 2001). This is the same for students who identify as non-religious.

On the other hand, respondents discuss how they notice they are a numerical minority.

Merel (ethnic majority, school 2): "I feel that Belgium somewhat starts to get taken over, and I just think that's a shame and you feel like a minority. Here at school, if you would separate between the pure pure Belgians and the rest, then we are so few in comparison to the rest and then we don't stand a chance."

Instead of describing a 'nothingness' like Robbe, Merel responds to the superdiverse minority-majority context by marking her ethnic identity as *"pure"* in relation to *"the rest"*. Other respondents use labels such as *"pure"* and *"real"* as well. She continues with explaining what we can understand by 'pureness'.

Merel: "Muslim girls feel 'high class' towards us. I think that is bad because they are still in our country, we are… well, they are probably also born here, but they have different roots than us, we are mostly pure, so it bothers me that in our own country we are seen as less."

Merel claims pureness by referring to nativist notions of 'blood and soil', and in this way justifies her ethnic identity to maintain a dominant position, even in a context where it is not the numerically majority group anymore. She expresses feelings of ethnic competition and threat (who is 'better', 'cooler' or in her words *"high class"* and *"seen as less"*), and thus further brightens ethnic and religious boundaries (Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders, 2002). By doing so, she claims an authentic 'pure' self, while others who are born in Belgium with *"different roots"* cannot.

Further, our respondents often focus on religion – and to be more specific Islam – to construct coolness and to mark group boundaries through repertoires on 'normal' youthful behaviour. As secularity and non-religiosity is perceived as the norm in Belgium (Driezen et al, 2021), religious young people in general are perceived as *"weird",* and non-religious youth perceive students' religiosity as *"going too far"*, *"unfree"* or *"limiting".* Zara, a Flemish-Belgian white

student who is Christian (school 2), discusses how she is seen as weird as she is expected to be non-religious.

> *Zara: "I am Christian and I believe. […] the people in my class are brought up as Christian, but not like me. They did their baptism and communion and that's it. I do go to the church once in a while and other people who are Christian always find it weird that I go to church, and that I find it important. I don't feel embarrassed, when the teacher asks 'who is still really a Christian?' then I put my hand up and I don't care if others think 'she is weird'."*

Zara feels that Christian and Muslim young people are more able to understand each other in, for example, discussions on religious topics and therefore become allies as 'religious others'. However, respondents do not problematize a Christian identity as much, as it is seen as a part of Belgian (European) cultural heritage and most Christian respondents participate in cultural practices such as going out and drinking alcohol, which is perceived as 'normal' and 'cool' youthful behaviour.

It is mostly Muslim students then who are depicted as *"un-youthlike"*, *"unfree"* and *"uncritical"* and who experience othering related to their religious identity, which often coincides with their ethnic background.

> *Tijs (ethnic majority, school 2): "In my football team there are a lot of 'allochtonen'. You can't ask them 'come party with us' because you know the answer: 'no because it's with alcohol', that's against their religion and they take it more seriously with praying and stuff. But I think they should be able to decide for themselves, the Quran says it's not allowed, but we are in a modern society now and I do think they can just get over it. I do think they could say 'Ok, I'm in'. Just join us, just drink (laughs)." […] I think the reason I have mostly Belgian friends is because they don't come party with us and I feel more comfortable among Belgians because you do more stuff with them. If you want to talk about partying and just the stuff we do at our age, you can't talk about that stuff with Muslims."*

Not only are young Muslims depicted as 'un-youthful' because they don't *"do the stuff we do at our age"*, they are also seen as lacking personal autonomy and agency (Amir-Moazami, 2010; Driezen et al, 2021). It is also Sarah's experience that Muslim youth are perceived as 'normal' if they would (just) participate in this 'youthful' behaviour of e.g. going out, while at the same time not mentioning or expressing their religion.

> *Sarah (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): "In my previous school, there were Moroccans and Turks that just participated with the Belgians, thus they actually were 'Belgianised'*

> *Moroccans and Turks, they just went along, for example not talking about their religion, they went partying, that was perceived as normal among the youth."*

These repertoires on ethnic purity and 'normal' youthful behaviour, which stem from dominant repertoires on cultural citizenship and ethnic authenticity, are used to maintain a racial or ethnic hierarchy, assert group boundaries and maintain dominant power relations. Minority youth who are also Belgian citizens, are not treated as full citizens (due to their 'roots') and are assigned an 'otherness' and 'uncoolness' as minorities due to their cultural and religious practices (Beaman, 2017). So, how do our minoritized respondents negotiate their othered position and claim a cool identity?

Inverting othering: repertoire on ethnic hybridity among minority youth

As minority youth have to relate to 'pure' Belgians and 'normal' 'youthful' behaviour, they, in turn, embrace an ethnic authenticity by emphasizing ethnic hybridity as cool.

> *Ayoub (ethnic and religious minority, school 2): "Being in between, I actually experience it as special. Because if I were only Turkish, then I wouldn't know how it feels to be Belgian, and now I have an idea of both. I am mixed. So that is kind of special, I feel good about that. I feel proud to be a mix of Belgian and Turkish."*

Being 'ethnic' or religious is seen as something *"special"*, something *"extra"* and something to *"be proud"* of.

> *Wiam (ethnic and religious minority, school 2): "I am a little bit proud to be Muslim, because you have something extra than only being Belgian, so that's good. You have something more special. You are something else, more than just a Belgian."*

Wiam shows that she has something more than *"only being Belgian"*, and this establishes her uniqueness and assertiveness in contrast to taken-for-granted white identities (Crul, 2018). A repertoire on ethnic hybridity relates to a broader neoliberal cultural repertoire on expressive individualism, which is a dominant repertoire within Western societies (Cortois & Laermans, 2018). Expressive individualism refers to 'self-expression' and 'being true to yourself', where each individual is unique which resonates with a superdiverse context.

As a consequence, minoritized youth can redefine cultural practices such as going out and drinking, as *"boring"* instead of cool.

Abdel (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): "Belgians really have a dry sense of humour. It's just… boring, it's just so dead simple, what do they talk about? What they did at home, that they went drinking, and smoking weed, and that's it."

Respondents discuss then how it is perceived to be cool to hang out with people who have a migration background.

Sarah (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): "It used to be cool to be Moroccan, you know, and I started to behave more like that and I wanted to participate. I used to give a negative connotation to being Belgian."

AD: What was cool then?

Sarah: "Just hanging out with Moroccans and stuff, the cool groups were the Moroccans and people who came from another country. The Belgians were 'tattas' or 'Flamands'. So if you wanted to be cool, then you had to hang out with people from another background."

It must be noted that Sarah discusses that this used to be the case when she was younger, and she expresses she does not belief this to be cool anymore. As boundaries can vary and shift according to contexts, they can vary over time as well.

Imaan explains how her friends from minoritized groups describe her as *"Belgianised"* as she hangs out with her Belgian majority friends and being *"too Belgian"* is seen as uncool. It also shows that respondents need to 'negotiate' their identity in relation to the 'in-group' of minority peers.

Imaan (ethnic and religious minority, school 2): "Sometimes I get the comment that I am 'too Belgian' because I have many Belgian friends. They [her friends from minoritized groups] would come and ask 'why do you still hang out with them'. […] They would say 'I thought you were really 'Belgianised', but actually you are really cool'. They would say that after they have spoken to me. But that doesn't sound nice 'Belgianised', like you have changed your culture and it is also a bit hurtful because what does it mean 'Belgianised'? Is it something positive or negative?"

Thus, minority youth can rework and negotiate ethnic and religious boundaries and invert their othered and 'uncool' position by drawing on a cultural repertoire of ethnic hybridity. By re-evaluating what coolness means, they can re-identify with a new positive self-image through which they can change the normative ethnic or religious order, and thus change their socially excluded position (Goffman, 1963; Wimmer, 2013; Lamont et al, 2016; Modood, 2019; Vazquez & Wetzel, 2009).

Managing a contested and paralyzed white identity

In this minority-majority context, it seems that identities of majority youth become contested and questioned as well, as they are referred to as *"tattas"* and *"flamands"*.

> *Sarah (ethnic and religious minority, school 1): "A tatta or flamand is used for the people who are the so-called real Belgians, and who – how do I put this – are used to nothing, the white white children, the people who have money or who have it too good, anyway something negative. Who have it easy and who know nothing about other cultures and are just busy with themselves."*

The labels *"tattas"* and *"flamands"* are ways to describe and mark the previously taken-for-granted ethnic (and non-religious) identities of white majority students, and point out their privileged position.

> *Zoë (ethnic majority, school 2): "I get comments such as 'you aren't a tatta'. I have a friend, she is Bosnian, and she told a couple of people in class 'I don't want to be seen with you, they are tattas', then I am like what… They call us 'Flamands' and 'tattas' and if I hear it, I get mad, it is just as bad as 'negro', so don't do it. I already felt bad about it. It hurts me when someone says 'she is such a Flamand', then I almost feel bad for being white and Belgian."*

As Zoë describes, she *"almost feels bad for being Belgian"*, as a Belgian identity becomes contested and associated with 'uncoolness'. White being the norm against which minority youth had to profile themselves for such a long times, seem to have resulted in many boundary strategies such as inverting otherness as described above and vibrant and resilient ethnic and religious identities among minoritized youth. This raises the question of how white majority students themselves integrate into superdiverse majority-minority settings. On which cultural repertoires do they draw to negotiate their contested white identity?

We discuss what Crul (2018) calls a paralyzed white identity. Paralyzed because of losing, or the fear of losing, its dominant position, and the inability to react or the apparent reactive or defensive ways of responding to changing circumstances. Respondents can try to distance themselves from 'being a tatta' by expressing a relational assimilation, i.e. the back and forth adjustments in daily life by minority and majority young people as they come into contact with each other (Jiménez, 2017). Zoë discusses how she makes an effort to learn and educate herself more about different cultures and religions.

> *Zoë: "I tried to understand Islam. I want as much information as possible, I want to talk to Ayoub (her classmate) and understand what he is talking about. Islam is getting bigger and*

bigger, even bigger than Christianity. I think it is going to be very important in the future, so I want to understand it and I even want to learn the Berber language."

However, Crul (2018) argues that this so-called relational assimilation only goes so far, and that members of a dominant majority group tend to stick to and maintain an internalized position of privilege, which Jiménez (2017, p;194) calls 'the ability of privilege to reinvent itself'. Indeed, Zoë continues:

"I am super interested, but I don't want to change my own stuff for that. There is a certain limit."

If we look further at how respondents deal with these challenges, it is noticeable that they seem to have difficulties overcoming nativist thinking and forming their arguments and opinions in line with their self-proclaimed inclusive and open-minded perception of diversity. Discourses such as reverse racism are expressed where minority youth are seen as those who discriminate.

Zoë: "If they call others 'tatta' then that's discrimination as well. You hear stuff about racism so much. Just that word. But I'm like the Belgians… they don't, no racism. If someone says something bad about a Moroccan than immediately, that's racism. But if someone says something about a Belgian than that's 'funny'. Moroccans are supposedly oppressed by the whites, but I have the feeling it is the other way around?"

We already discussed how Merel responds in a defensive way to the minority-majority context by applying a repertoire of ethnic purity and thus preserving her dominant position. However, it is difficult to apply these discourses in a superdiverse context, where most minority students are born in Belgium. She stumbles with her words when she tries to use the argument that Muslims should adapt to the Belgian context, realizing that their peers are often also born in Belgium.

Merel (ethnic majority, school 2): "Muslim girls are in our country, we are here… well, they are probably born here as well, but they have different roots than us."

Tijs stumbles in the same way when he thinks that Flanders *"should remain ours"* but realizes that it actually *"belongs to everyone"*. Respondents tend to construct unclear and incoherent arguments; Tijs, for example, mixes up various right-wing arguments, even those which are not of direct importance for him as a teenager (e.g. referring to pensions). He ends his comments by saying he would never vote for those right-wing parties, showing his unclear stance.

Tijs (ethnic majority, school 2): "I don't really think it is a problem that there is a little bit of everything in Flanders. But I do think that they should adapt to us and that they shouldn't straight away say that we are racist if we say something about it. If you keep hearing 'you are racist' then you start to feel like 'ah no, if they keep acting like that, then they shouldn't come here anymore'. If they keep on saying that, they are creating hate. […] There are many cultures and nationalities in Flanders, but I do think that Flanders is a little bit ours… Well, it belongs to everyone… but it should remain a bit ours. […] I think Muslims, Moroccans and Turks are a bit in conflict with Flanders, and by that, I mean our rules and laws. For example with [ritual] slaughter without stunning, that stuff and yeah also with refugees and that they… well, our pensions are low while they then… they come to our country. […] So I do agree with the right-wing parties on that stuff. And you see Dries Van Langenhove[16] on the news, and I do think that some of us… not that you agree but… I do think some of us think 'ok he has a point' if you check his clips on Facebook. But I wouldn't vote for them, I would vote for 'Groen[17]', I think."

Thus, youth from a dominant majority group seem to express great difficulty choosing which cultural repertoires to draw on to negotiate their emerging contested white identity (and thus a shifting racial-ethnic order and loss of status), which leaves them prone to reactive and nativist discourses such as identity threat and reverse racism. While Tijs does not necessarily identify with extreme-right wing parties, he discusses how he thinks they may have a point and tells the researcher how he and his friends distribute stickers of the extreme-right youth movement 'schild & vriend' in school *"just for fun"*.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have shown how ethnic majority and minority youth in a superdiverse city and school context blur group boundaries by applying a cultural repertoire of commonplace diversity and stress the normalcy and coolness of their superdiverse peer relations and school context (Kostet et al, 2021; Wessendorf, 2014). However, a more in-depth analysis revealed how ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries emerge as bright, where minority youth need to navigate othering and social exclusion processes. Minority youth are often depicted in contrast to majority youth, where the latter are part of the dominant, normative and taken-for-granted majority group.

We looked at how a cool identity is constructed among youth to negotiate and rework these ethnic and religious boundaries. Our analysis shows how majority youth claim a cool identity

[16] Member of Vlaams Belang, Extreme right-wing populist party with anti-immigrant policy viewpoints.
[17] Left wing green party.

and maintain their dominant position by using a cultural repertoire of ethnic purity, where minority youth are described as 'the other' in relation to 'pure' Belgian youth. In addition, minority, and specifically Muslim, youth are depicted as 'uncool', 'abnormal' and 'unyouthful' in relation to the dominant (white) perspective on coolness and youthfulness. A cool identity is constructed that maintains a racial or ethnic hierarchy and dominant power relations. Minority youth, at their turn, rework and negotiate these bright ethnic and religious boundaries by re-evaluating and re-defining a cool identity through a cultural repertoire of ethnic hybridity. By doing this, they invert their othered position, re-identify with a new positive self-image and challenge the normative ethnic or religious hierarchy (Modood, 2019; Wimmer, 2013).

Although white identities are often taken for granted, our analysis shows that majority youth in an emerging superdiverse majority-minority setting (Crul, 2016) are increasingly confronted with a contested white identity. Less attention has been paid in the literature and empirical research to how majority groups in a superdiverse society need to reimagine their position in society, which was previously mainly a burden felt by minoritized individuals and groups (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015; Jiménez, 2017). While minority groups have ample experience with stigmatization and an acquired culture of challenging ethnic or religious hierarchies, our results show how majority youth seem to lack tools to negotiate the new group boundaries in superdiverse majority-minority settings. They express a paralyzed white identity, paralyzed by the fear of losing its dominant position and react mostly defensive and reactionary to these changing circumstances (Crul, 2018). These young people tend to use repertoires such as ethnic purity, reverse racism and identity threat, and are prone to voicing right-wing populist arguments to feel acknowledged in their identity threat, rather than drawing on repertoires such as critical self-reflection, intersectionalism and anti-racism. Our results are in line with studies increasingly looking into the spread of extreme ideas and ideologies of far-right populist groups among young people, and the impact of large-scale commercialization of their symbols, codes and divisive messages on the radicalization of white youth (Bucholtz, 2010; Crul, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2018). This trend raises the important question of how white young people can develop and draw upon tools and repertoires to manage their changing social position, without the need to call upon racist and nativist white identity politics. It also raises the need for schools and other educational institutions to develop and disseminate non-reactive discourses that are better adapted to the superdiverse contexts in which young people currently find themselves.

Chapter 9

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this dissertation was to study, using symbolic boundary theory (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass & Lamont, 2007), how ethno-religious minority and majority students navigate their multiple social identities in the superdiverse city of Antwerp, and how they construct, negotiate and rework ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries.

In this concluding chapter, I will first discuss how ethno-religious minority youth are symbolically constructed as 'Others', and experience social exclusion from, for instance, peer groups. In addition, the identities of ethno-religious majority students appear as dominant, normative and taken for granted, yet they too become contested and questioned in a minority-majority setting. From my analysis, ethnic and religious symbolic boundaries emerge as bright in these superdiverse school settings.

In the second part of this conclusion, I discuss the cultural repertoires young people can draw upon to engage in boundary work, and creatively and strategically negotiate and rework these symbolic boundaries along ethnic and religious lines. I will first discuss how young people can employ a cultural repertoire of commonplace diversity, and can emphasize their multiple belongings. Further, I discuss how supranational identities such as a European and cosmopolitan identity, can be potential collective identities for young people, providing them with a shared sense of belonging in superdiverse settings: they can be more inclusive and welcoming to young people's multiple identities than more mono-cultural and exclusive (sub)national identities, such as a Flemish identity. Moreover, I will elaborate on how Muslim youth can enact repertoires of religious privatization and deculturalization to destigmatize their discredited identities, and repertoires of religious individualism to redefine what it means to be agentive and religious. I will also discuss a repertoire of ethnic hybridity, in which ethno-religious minority students re-evaluate what it means to be 'cool' and challenge their minoritized position. Lastly, I will discuss the difficulties reported by white majority students when attempting to navigate their white identities in a superdiverse setting, and how they are prone to nativist repertoires such as ethnic purity.

Constructing and navigating ethnic and religious boundaries in a superdiverse environment

How did my respondents navigate and experience social relations in their superdiverse environment? How were social categories and moral hierarchies constructed along ethnic and

religious lines? I will discuss the results from the perspectives of respondents in various social positions: youth with a (non-Western European) migration background, Muslim and Christian young people and lastly, (white) youth without a migration background and with a non-religious identity.

Youth with a (non-Western European) migration background

From my results, it is clear that youth with a (non-Western European) migration background are often described and depicted in contrast to (white) youth without a migration background. The first are often described as *'foreigners'*, *'non-natives (in Dutch, allochtonen)'* and the *'others'*, while youth from the dominant ethnic majority group are referred to as *'natives (in Dutch, autochtonen)'* and as *'real'* Belgians. Thus, in line with other research, a classification is made along ethno-racial lines, in which ethnic minority students are not seen as fully part of a (sub)national imagination (Alba & Foner, 2015; Beaman, 2017; Duyvendak, Geschiere & Tonkens, 2016; Reijerse, Van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet & Duriez, 2013). A recent study in Ghent on the association between group identities and ethnic citizenship norms among young adults and their parents, showed that Flemish identity is strongly associated with a restrictive, ethnic attitude toward new groups in society (Hooghe & Stiers, 2020). It is no surprise then, that in line with other studies (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018), the results from my quantitative study show that ethnic minority students (specifically students with a Moroccan background) relate less strongly to a Flemish identity than ethnic majority students.

In addition, in my interviews students with a migration background emphasized their multiple belongings, such as feeling Belgian, Flemish, Moroccan, Muslim, European and so forth. However, they also reported feeling tensions between their Belgian and Flemish identity and their ethno-religious identities. As they feel symbolically excluded from their Belgian and Flemish identities, or felt the need to downplay their ethno-religious identities in order to be accepted as Belgian and Flemish, they also reported experiences of social exclusion. They discussed how they feel socially excluded from 'native' peers as they do not want to hang out with them. In addition, they said they were often treated unfairly by their teachers and discussed multiple experiences of discrimination within and outside of school.

Muslim and Christian youth

From my interviews it became clear that constructions of the ethno-racial or cultural 'Other' were also particularly pronounced when it came to Muslim students. And while their othering

was partly directed at their religiousness, Christian students with or without a migration background did not have the same experience of their religious identity being problematized. If Christian youth with a migration background discussed othering, they mostly discussed their migration background and ethno-racial identity (e.g. their skin colour) (as in the previous section). Strikingly, in all my interviews, when talking about religion, respondents would immediately discuss Islam and have a clear opinion on it, and talk about their Muslim peers, rather than discussing other religions or non-religiosity. Thus, the religious identification of my Muslim respondents was highly debated, discussed, problematized, etc. and my results show, as I have discussed throughout my dissertation, that negative social connotations of religion are particularly related to Islam, rather than religion in general (Cesari, 2004; Foner & Alba, 2008; Kivisto, 2014; Sunier, 2014; Trittler, 2019; Turner, 2010a).

I saw this particularly when I analysed how young people, in their interactions, negotiate their access to a 'youth identity' and to what it means to be 'cool'. Non-Muslim students often took part in practices that are seen as 'normal' 'youthful' behaviour, such as drinking alcohol, and therefore their belonging to the set of young people was not questioned by others. It was clear that Muslim youth, due to their religious identity, were less able to claim this 'youthfulness'. For instance, Bilal does not drink alcohol, and is therefore seen by friends as *'limited in his choices'*, even when he actively choses to not drink. Muslim youth are, then, constructed by their peers as *'weird'*, *'boring'* and *'un-youthlike'* for not choosing normative youthful behaviour.

In addition, being seen as 'limited' was a point frequently made in the interviews. Indeed, Muslim youth were specifically constructed as 'morally less' or 'culturally other', through dominant beliefs on what it means to be 'free' or 'autonomous'. Their agency and individual autonomy were constantly questioned by various audiences such as their peers, teachers and broader society, due to their religious identification. They were seen as *'unfree'*, *'not able to form their own opinion'* and *'uncritical'*, while non-Muslims were said to be *'creative in their thinking'*, *'self-reflexive'* and 'better' at thinking for themselves. This was even more so for Muslim girls who chose to wear a headscarf. Their personal choice was frequently questioned by friends and teachers, and they were often perceived as oppressed.

Therefore, young Muslims have to relate to a society that only perceives them as agentive and 'youthful' when they adapt to the mainstream (secular) definition of how religious identification should be expressed. They should, it is thought, emphasize personal choice and

self-development over commitment to religious traditions, practices and even their communities (Fadil & Fernando, 2015; O'Brien, 2017; Mahmood, 2011), and should experience or express their religiosity only in the private sphere (wearing a headscarf in public, for instance, does not align with that expectation) (Asad, 2003; Paul, 2018; Ivanescu, 2016). My Christian respondents often complied with this dominant secular expectation to practise and express their religion in private, and this can explain partly why their religious identity seemed less questioned. My Muslim respondents thus need to negotiate their identities within this predominantly secular, but also specifically anti-Muslim and culturally Christian, context, while they also attach great importance to their Muslim identities. Indeed, while the respondents might differ in how they practise their religion, they all perceived themselves as Muslim and emphasized being Muslim as an important social identity for them. Evidently, they also interact with Muslim audiences (such as family and peers) and wish to maintain their social belonging.

Youth without a migration background and with a non-religious identity

The (white) ethnic identities of young people without a migration background, and of youth who were non-religious, often remained uncontested, unquestioned and taken for granted. Respondents would for instance express a 'nothingness' or 'ethnic blandness' in relation to their white ethnic identities. Non-religious respondents would argue that they never had to think about their non-religious secular identity and would act surprised if I asked them about it. As such identities are taken for granted and not problematized, respondents do not necessarily express any strong emotions about them (and rather describe them as 'unimportant') (Perry, 2001; Skey, 2010).

However, interestingly, my analysis also shows that the identities and social positions of ethno-religious majority youth too, in an emerging majority-minority setting, are now being questioned and contested. Respondents discuss how they notice that they too have become a numerical minority, and majority youth (i.e. white ethnic majority youth, non-religious and Christian youth without a migration background) are referred to as *'flamands',* which indicates how Flemish identity is associated with the ethnic majority group, and *'tattas'*[18], a label to describe *'real Belgians'* who are *'used to nothing'* and *'are the white children, who have*

[18] The term 'tatta' is in the same way used by Dutch youngster in the study of Van De Weerd (2020, p.72) to delineate members of the ethnic minority group. The term comes from 'ptata' or 'tata', which means 'potato' in the Surinamese language Sranan Tongo. It refers to a stereotypical image of a white, potato-eating Dutch person. The term, thus, has a connotation of the colonial relations of the Netherlands, and this youth language has blown over to Antwerp.

money, who have it too good, for whom life is easy and who are ignorant about other cultures'. This is a way of marking previously taken for granted white ethnic identities, criticizing and questioning their normative and privileged position. Youth without a migration background are therefore also encouraged to negotiate their contested white identities. This relates to a new call in superdiversity research to also study how individuals without a migration background can participate in a superdiverse environment (Crul, 2016; Crul & Leslie, 2023; Jiménez, 2017).

Symbolic boundary work: young people negotiating ethnic and religious boundaries

As my results show, ethnic and religious boundaries emerge as bright, constructing clear social categories and moral hierarchies between ethnic minority and majority, Muslim and non-Muslim young people. In the next section, I elaborate on how my respondents engage in symbolic boundary work to negotiate, rework or maintain these boundaries, and discuss the cultural repertoires they draw on to do so.

Expressing a repertoire of commonplace diversity and multiple social belongings

In the introductory paragraph to Chapter seven, Chaimae stresses the importance of her multiple social identities. She presents herself as *'fully Belgian, fully Moroccan and fully Muslim',* just as, in this study, many of the respondents emphasize their multiple identities. While in the previous section, I discussed how respondents delineate group boundaries with ethnic and religious markers and can experience social exclusion from peer groups, most of our respondents (from various social positions) do report having diverse peer groups and relations (within and outside of school), and see this as a normal part of their social environment and everyday life. They describe the superdiverse context as good, interesting, normal, realistic and a *'sign of the times',* and compare themselves with older generations (their parents or teachers), stating that they themselves find this more normal as they grow up in this setting and have friends from different cultures. They even state and describe this setting as *'cool',* a place where having superdiverse friendship groups can improve one's social status.

Thus, my analysis shows that young people can invoke a cultural repertoire of commonplace diversity to navigate their superdiverse setting, where they can express the normalcy of their multiple social belongings and thus blur group boundaries. With this I contribute to the literature on how citizens in superdiverse settings positively evaluate and experience these settings (Crul & Leslie, 2023; Jiménez, 2017), and this study specifically aligns with empirical studies on how children and youth navigate these settings and diverse friendship groups (Kostet

et al, 2021; Wessendorf, 2016). Future research should further look into how children and youth are potentially more able to draw upon repertoires of commonplace diversity to blur group boundaries than adults such as, for instance, their parents. However, attention should also still be directed to how categorical inequalities continue to be reproduced in these settings. In addition, it would be interesting to further look into how a symbolic marker of 'coolness' is used by young people to negotiate their multiple social belongings within superdiverse settings.

Collective identity formation: the potential of supranational identities

In our analysis, we studied the potential of supranational identities, specifically European and an everyday cosmopolitan identity, as collective identities for young people, providing them with a shared sense of belonging in a superdiverse setting. First, we studied the extent to which ethnic minority youth (Moroccan) and ethnic majority youth identify with a European identity. Our results show that Moroccan students identify significantly more as European than as Flemish. This is in line with other empirical studies that indicate that individuals with a non-European migration background relate more strongly to a European identity than to (sub)national identities of the countries they live in (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Erisen, 2017; Teney, Hanquinet, & Bürkin, 2016). Our results also showed that ethnic minority and majority youth resemble each other more closely in terms of their European identity (in line with Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016). Therefore, we concluded that a European identity could be a potential collective identity for young people in superdiverse setting, potentially blurring group boundaries.

Second, we studied the potential of an everyday cosmopolitan identity as a collective identity for young people, and also looked at the role of religiosity. An 'everyday' or 'ordinary' cosmopolitanism refers to an openness towards and appreciation of other cultures, and feelings of tolerance and being a world citizen (Hannerz, 2004; Skrbis & Woodward, 2007; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). It moves away from a Eurocentric and elitist understanding of cosmopolitanism, and rather understands it as 'rooted' in quotidian and everyday local contexts and interactions (Appah, 2010; Werbner, 2015). Our results show that Muslim, Christian and non-religious youth relate strongly to an everyday cosmopolitan identity and orientations, and they identify to the same degree as world citizens and express an equal openness and respect to cultural differences. This could therefore also be a viable collective identity for young people who negotiate their multiple social belongings in a super diverse city context.

In addition, our results show that religion can be compatible with cosmopolitanism, and particularly Islam, as Muslim respondents had the highest level of cosmopolitan orientations, and their religiosity had a positive effect on their cosmopolitan orientations. While most literature has focused on an incompatibility between religion (and specifically Islam) and cosmopolitanism, and has presupposed that the latter is intertwined with liberalism and secularism, our study helps to approach religion as a positive contributor to the emergence of global citizenship (Iqtidar, 2012; Levitt, 2008). We contribute therefore to (qualitative) research that demonstrates the use of universalist religious repertoires by Muslims and Christians to transcend symbolic boundaries (Lamont et al, 2002; Synnes, 2018).

With these results, we argue that supranational identities might be more attractive for youth in superdiverse settings: they can potentially bypass exclusive interpretations of (sub)national identities, and research shows that they are associated with more positive attitudes towards diversity (Erisen, 2017; Hooghe & Stiers, 2020). It is interesting for future research to further understand the potential of a European identity and cosmopolitan orientations as repertoires for young people to draw upon to emphasize a shared sense of belonging across ethnic and religious boundaries, and for minoritized communities to claim an equal group status and symbolic access to feeling and being seen as a full citizen (Lamont et al, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016).

There are some limitations to the potential of these supranational identities to act as collective identities. Our results also show that while religiosity among Muslims fosters cosmopolitanism, experiences of discrimination had a negative impact on their cosmopolitan orientations. We also looked at the impact of teacher support on European and cosmopolitan identity, and our results suggest that a positive relationship between the student and teacher influences the extent to which young people identify with possible social identities. As argued by Werbner (2015), a cosmopolitan identity remains fragile, and institutional racism and discrimination can hinder cosmopolitan creativity. Therefore, it seems that a cosmopolitan identity could still be less available to minoritized youth experiencing discrimination. In addition, a cosmopolitan repertoire may be interesting for transcending group boundaries, and while our concept of everyday cosmopolitanism allows the recognition and an embrace of diversity, there is also a risk that this repertoire may be applied or performed in a colour-blind way. This would be, for instance, the case if there would be a main focus on the shared values as ‘human beings’, which could overlook cultural differences and lived experiences of discrimination (De leersnyder, Gündemir & Agirdag, 2021). An everyday cosmopolitan

repertoire should, thus, recognize the continuing unequal power dynamics and stratification along ethno-racial and religious lines in superdiverse settings.

Furthermore, scholars such as Bhambra (2016) argue that a European identity, in turn, cannot be perceived independently from Europe's colonial and violent past, in particular in relation to the countries from which many of Europe's ethnic minorities and recent refugees originated. As I also discussed in my dissertation, Muslim identities are often contrasted to 'European' values of liberalism and concepts such as 'freedom of speech'. This negative connotation of 'Europe', as well as the way in which minorities are constructed in contrast to a morally superior Europe could hinder the potential of this collective social identity (e.g. Boukala, 2019). While youth can potentially use cultural elements and values from a European repertoire, such as equality and human rights to claim this identity, it is still unclear what meanings they give to a European identity and how they would reconcile these inclusive values (such as equality) with, for example, Europe's colonial past and present.

Due to these limitations, future research should use qualitative methods to explore further how youth give meaning to these two identities and how they would invoke these repertoires. With our quantitative approach we can draw some general conclusions, and it would be interesting to study the meaning-making processes in more depth. For instance, Kostet, Verschraegen & Clycq (2022b) already found that children display a different form of cosmopolitanism ('social cosmopolitanism') in comparison to their teachers ('moral cosmopolitanism') and parents ('cultural cosmopolitanism'). In addition, we did not look at potentially other inclusive collective identities related to the city, and how these can potentially blur ethnic and religious boundaries (Oosterlynck, Verschraegen & van Kempen, 2018). Future research could look into this and, for example, compare cities: does the situation differ between a more left-wing city such as Ghent, and a right-wing city such as Antwerp? Some research already shows that in cities with strong extreme right-wing policies, such as Antwerp, ethnic minorities identify less strongly with their city (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Verkuyten, 2016).

Repertoires of religious individualism: emphasizing personal choice and reflexivity among Muslim youth and girls

Our Muslim respondents identify as Muslim and some wish to participate in religious practices and traditions, and maintain their belonging to their Muslim communities (families, peers, etc.), yet their non-Muslim friends, teachers and broader society stress individualism over religious tradition and therefore question their autonomy and agency.

Our Muslim respondents rework these tensions by actively enacting a repertoire of religious individualism emphasizing *personal religious choice*. They can invoke this repertoire to emphasize their active choice to apply religious norms and practices flexibly, and to attach their own meaning to particular ideas and practices (Hemming & Madge, 2012). This recalls literature on creative religious bricolage, combining various elements of different meaning systems (Dobbelaere, 2011); they aim to strike a balance between the cultural expectations of the broader secular context and normative youth culture, and their religious commitments and social belongings (O'Brien, 2017). In addition, they not only express personal choice by 'combining' cultural elements, they can also express agency when embracing religious practices and norms, and apply personal choice *within* their broader religious framework (Fadil, 2005; O'Brien, 2015; Mahmood, 2011). Thus, they can express their individuality within a religious collective. Our respondents also expressed their autonomy by stressing the importance of *reflexive religiosity*. As young Muslims grow up in a society where Islam is a chronic object of discussion and debate, there is little space for an unreflective and taken for granted identification as Muslim (Brubaker, 2013). Because their religion is contested in public debates, our respondents are urged to consciously reflect on their position and identification as Muslim.

These repertoires of religious individualism were also mostly invoked by Muslim girls, as they were often seen by peers, teachers and broader society as oppressed and limited in their choices (definitely when choosing to wear the headscarf). They are often seen as victims of social coercion and as suffering from 'false consciousness' (e.g. thinking that they choose the veil) (Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Yeste, Zeguari, Álvarez & Folch, 2020). Our female respondents emphasize free will and insist that they are in control of their own lives when embracing religious norms and customs such as wearing the headscarf (Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Mahmood, 2011; Rizzo et al, 2020). At the same time, they also experienced contestation from some Muslim audiences. Women in general often experience greater social control and pressure to conform to social norms (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1989; Van Kerckem, Van De Putte & Stevens, 2013). This is related to the symbolic role of women as 'designated keepers of culture' and of collective cultural, (sub)national and religious identities (Amir-Moazami, 2010; Van Kerckem, Van De Putte & Stevens, 2013). Yet, our analysis shows that efforts to achieve equality do not have to take place outside of religious frameworks; these girls invoke feminist discourses and challenge gender norms without compromising their religious identifications (Fadil, 2005; Mahmood, 2011; Yeste et al, 2020). Our male respondents also challenge these

gender norms and rework people's preconception of them as 'oppressors' by emphasizing the importance of individuality and personal choice within their religious frame of reference.

As our respondents wish to construct dignified selves in relation to non-Muslim and Muslim audiences, they rework, challenge and reconstruct dominant definitions and perceptions of agency and individuality. They do this by invoking a repertoire of religious individualism that offers resources for religious individuals to emphasise their autonomy in being religious, and to express their personal choice within a religious frame (O'Brien, 2015). The repertoire of religious individualism blurs the constructed tensions between religious identification and individualism, and enables young Muslims to belong to a broader individualistic society, while preserving their religion as a significant marker of their identity and maintaining their engagement with their religious communities (Amir-Moazami, 2010; Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Fadil, 2005; O'Brien, 2015). A repertoire of religious individualism thus challenges the dominant assumption that individualism would be incompatible with religious participation.

My study therefore contributes to the debates within sociology of religion on individualization trends in Europe, in which less scholarly attention has been paid to religious diversity and to the emergence of individualization trends in non-Christian and immigration minoritized religions, or to how communal and public forms of religion remain relevant in modern superdiverse settings. With our results, we show that individualization is not only reflected in religious decline, privatization or religious 'bricolage' and 'pick and mix' religion, but that other expressions of individualization can develop *within* and *through* a religious framework (instead of 'outside' or 'next' to it) (Fadil, 2005; Mahmood, 2011). Thus, researchers should be aware that individualization can emerge in different and various ways, and should pay more attention to how individualization can also be reflected in adherence to religious tradition and finding new interpretations within it.

Destigmatizing through privatization and deculturalization of Islam

Furthermore, our results also showed how our Muslim respondents invoke repertoires of privatization of their religiosity and deculturalization of Islam, and, thus, other forms of individualization, to negotiate their stigmatized and discredited identities.

Using a repertoire of privatization, they emphasize an 'Islam of the Heart', i.e. an emotional and private dimension of religion, in which they prioritize what they feel and believe, and how they interact with others (e.g. being good to others), rather than religious practices (e.g. prayer) (Beaman, 2016; Killian, 2007). Some respondents emphasized an 'Islam of the Heart' only to

refer to their intrinsic, personal beliefs and individual religious experiences. Others invoked this repertoire as they did not necessarily wanted to practise their religion, but still identified as Muslim and attached a great importance to their social belonging to their Muslim communities. For other respondents, this strategy of privatization and internalization is rather pragmatic, as it allows respondents to fit within the dominant perception in a secular context of how religion should be practised (in private) and allows them to avoid stigma and discrimination.

As Lamont et al (2016) have argued, social actors can destigmatize discredited identities by using actual vs. ideal strategies. Destigmatization through privatization can be an 'actual' strategy, but our results suggest that these are not 'ideal' strategies for Muslim youth. Our respondents discuss, for instance, how they do not necessarily want to express an 'Islam of the Heart'. Rather, they refer to this idea as they conceal their religious identity and practices from their non-religious friends, fearing to be judged (Amer, 2020). One respondent, for instance, takes off her headscarf when she applies for a student job, because she fears she will not get the job otherwise. Thus, privatization can be enacted as an active strategy to manage stigma and to achieve an equal footing in mainstream society, while upholding religious belonging (Beaman, 2016; Jeldtoft, 2012; Ryan, 2014; Synnes, 2018). By privatizing and not prioritizing their religious beliefs and practices, they can be seen as more 'integrated' in their secular societies (Amir-Moazami, 2022; Modood, 2019). Thus, while internalization is seen as a desired consequence of secularization in Western Europe, for Muslim youth it is not necessarily a preferred individualization strategy.

Another destigmatization strategy that is not necessarily 'ideal' is the enacting of a repertoire of deculturalization of Islam. Our respondents destigmatize Islam by disassociating negative traits such as gender inequality from Islam, and relating them to ethnic and cultural elements, from which they, as individuals, distance themselves. This helps respondents to avoid stigma and allows a more nuanced view on Islam, which is often seen by others as inextricably linked to traditional culture. Rather, respondents can blur boundaries by invoking their religious identity as something that transcends ethnic and traditional practices. However, this approach also shifts and redirects these symbolic categorizations and stigma to ethnic and cultural elements (or to for instance 'bad Muslims'): these anti-Muslim prejudices are not deconstructed per se, but rather maintained (Drouhot, 2023). Research shows that people are more likely to adopt these strategies when there are severe social consequences, such as experiencing social

exclusion from valuable social relations and opportunities (Amer, 2020), which is definitely the case for our Muslim respondents.

Our results suggest that future research should pay enough attention to how chosen boundary strategies by minoritized groups are not always 'ideal' or preferred strategies, as social actors can be limited in which repertoires they can invoke or have access to, to negotiate their stigmatized identities and socially excluded positions.

Redefining what it means to be cool: a repertoire of ethnic hybridity among ethno-religious minority students

In our analysis, we saw that ethnic and religious minority students negotiate feelings of social exclusion by redefining what it means to be 'cool'. They draw upon a repertoire of ethnic hybridity and authenticity, embracing their ethnic hybrid identities as something to be proud of and as 'cool' because it gives them something *'special'* and *'extra'*. Because of their 'Other' ethnic and religious identities they can present themselves as authentic: this relates to a broader and influential repertoire of expressive individualism, in which self-expression, and having a unique and authentic identity, is highly valued and provides one with a positive social status (Cortois & Laermans, 2018).

By redefining what 'coolness' means, these young people can identify with a new positive self-image and change and invert the previous normative ethno-religious order or hierarchy (Goffman, 1963; Wimmer, 2013; Lamont et al, 2016; Modood, 2019; Vazquez & Wetzel, 2009). It could be argued that invoking this repertoire would further brighten group boundaries, as, for instance, respondents might be seen as less cool if they hang out with Belgian students without a migration background. Minority students would then be blamed, by peers and teachers, for being the cause of group boundaries, or even for reverse racism. However, it is important to bear in mind that minority students invoke and perform this repertoire of ethnic authenticity as a response to existing and powerful stigmatization and social exclusion (Brubaker, 2013; Vazquez & Wetzel, 2009). These processes of vilification and stigmatization lead to a more self-conscious sense of their ethnic and religious identities and urge them to revalorize their stigmatized identities and reconstruct dignified identities for themselves (Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Brubaker, 2013; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Lamont, Morning & Mooney, 2002; Modood, 2019). They feel empowered to have an equal claim to dignified social positions and to a positive self-image, rather than aiming to further brighten group boundaries.

Contested white identities: nativist repertoires on ethnic purity and paralyzed white identities

As the previously taken for granted white and non-religious identities of our respondents become questioned and contested in a majority-minority setting, these young people are urged to negotiate this change in social status. While respondents emphasized a commonplace diversity and appreciation of diversity and a 'multicultural' context, some also invoked a repertoire of ethnic purity and authenticity. Within this repertoire they referred to their identities and social positions as *'pure'* and *'real'* in contrast to ethnic or religious minority students, and related this pureness to nativist and essentialist notions of 'blood and soil', by which others who are born in Belgium but have 'different roots' could not claim full citizenship due to their religion and/or migration background (Beaman, 2017; Duyvendak et al, 2016; Reijerse, Van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet & Duriez, 2013). In addition, they discussed how their culture and identity should be protected, as they perceived other ethno-religious cultures as a threat. Specifically a Christian identity was emphasized by some respondents, in which they did not focus on religious practices or beliefs in God, but rather on Christianity being an important part of Belgian culture and history, and used this to construct Islam as a threat to their national identities and cultural practices (in line with other studies, such as Joppke, 2018; Storm, 2011).

This confirms other studies which indicate a re-emergence of repertoires on 'reclaiming society' and 'protecting our identity' from a white perspective, in which populist, racial and secularist, but also culturally Christian, nativist discourses are used to construct distinctions between 'natives' and 'non-natives' (Alba & Foner, 2015; De Jong & Duyvendak, 2023; Kešić & Duyvendak, 2019). This repertoire of ethnic purity corresponds to claims that there is a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural and mono-religious static core to European societies (Alba & Foner, 2015; Crul 2018; Mepschen, 2019; Sadeghi, 2019). Drawing on a repertoire of ethnic purity, majority youth can apply a strategy of boundary maintenance, in which they justify and maintain a hierarchical order and their dominant social position (Wimmer, 2013).

Our results, however, also give some nuance to the use of this nativist repertoire, as the respondents mostly seemed to express what Crul (2018) described as a 'paralyzed' white identity, i.e. they lack the tools to make sense of a changing social status and to deal with feelings of fear of losing their social status. Indeed, our respondents seem to express great difficulty in choosing or even knowing which cultural repertoires are available to them to make sense of their contested identities. Rather than drawing on repertoires such as anti-racism or

social justice, they seem to have more access and to be more prone to nativist repertoires that in some way acknowledge their feelings of identity threat. However, they use these repertoires in a rather inconsistent, unconfident and confusing manner.

Our results add to those of other studies of how far-right populist groups specifically target young people when spreading extreme ideologies, and how this results in radicalization among white youth (Bucholtz, 2010; Crul, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2018). An important question remains to be answered concerning how white young people can draw upon repertoires to manage and give meaning to their changing social position, without needing to call upon nativist white identity politics. How can they also construct a dignified identity and experience feelings of positive self-worth, without having to call upon repertoires such as ethnic purity? There is a clear need for further research into other cultural tools which white majority youth could draw upon to give a positive meaning to the changed superdiverse setting and to participate positively in these settings (Crul & Leslie, 2023), but also into how new expressions of cultural essentialism and ethnic absolutism have become prominent in majority-minority settings (Mepschen, 2019), and how this impacts young people.

Recommendations for inclusion policies

I wish to discuss some recommendations: for schools, concerning diversity and inclusion policies, and for teachers (and other frontline workers), regarding their interactions with students and how they can support these young people in their identification processes.

Organizational policies for schools

Our study argues that a headscarf ban makes it more difficult for Muslim girls to acknowledge their multiple identities and belongings, and restricts their personal choice as to whether to engage in and embrace religious practices and identities. In addition, such a ban hinders young girls in their educational careers as well as in their work opportunities. In Flanders and Antwerp, many schools have headscarf bans. However, individuals, as well as the activist organisation BOEH!, have won legal cases specifically against GO! Education (one of the educational networks in Flanders), as its headscarf ban is against the fundamental right to religious freedom. Although BOEH! won their case in 2011, GO! Education has still not done away with its headscarf bans in schools (Ağirdağ, 2020; Dequeecker, Azabar & Akhandaf; 2022). Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel, the youth policy organization that represents secondary school students, has backed the call to abolish these headscarf bans.

Further, our study has shown that (sub)national identities in Flanders are often constructed as mono-cultural, and ethno-religious minority young people are often expected to leave behind or not emphasize parts of their ethno-religious identities if they wish to claim, for instance, a Flemish identity. The education system in Flanders puts forward a mono-cultural representation of the 'Flemish' nation (Clycq, 2016) and assimilationist practices are still prevalent, such as the strong focus on a mono-lingual approach (Ağirdağ, 2020). In addition, colour-blind approaches towards diversity are also prominent in educational settings in Flanders, which ignores and overlooks ethnocultural differences and, thus, fails to acknowledge important social identities of young people. This leads to so-called 'neutral' policies such as banning religious symbols (Ağirdağ, 2020; De Leersnyder, Gündemir & Ağirdağ, 2021; Konings, Ağirdağ & De Leersnyder, 2023). It is therefore difficult for young people to feel a belonging and connection to their school culture and community. There is a need in education to move to a superdiverse perspective, in which multiple diversities are recognized, adopting practices such as a multilingual approach, which is proven to be better for students' positive school careers (Ağirdağ, 2020). There is also a need for an anti-racist approach in schools. Vandeperre, Slaats, Heens and Azabar (2017), in their practical book for teachers and frontline workers, discuss how this can be done. For instance, they discuss how to create a anti-racist culture in schools (p. 300), how to reflect on your own frame of reference (p. 316), how to question what is constructed as 'neutral' or 'normal' (p. 352), or how to deculturalize and focus on socio-economic explanations (p. 318). Lastly, there is also a need for a more diverse teaching staff (Peeters, 2022), as well as better information on social justice and equity in teacher training (Dursun, Ağirdağ & Claes, 2023).

Further, our results also showed an expectation, in a Western European context, that religion should be practised in private and that this is the 'normal' course of events. However, this does not account for the high importance of religious identities for ethno-religious minority youth, or for their participation in communal and ritual practices (Göle, 2017). Schools could think about how to better accommodate this aspect for their students. For instance, many respondents who normally prayed five times a day, adjusted their practices to their secular or Christian school context and would catch up on their prayers after school. One of my respondents, however, did not want to 'catch up' and wanted to pray as much as possible at the right times. Therefore, he would hide somewhere in the school building to pray. Rather than discouraging young people from practising and expressing their religion, and even potentially making it

taboo, schools could take a more supportive attitude, by, for instance, providing safer spaces in which youth can practise their religion.

Moreover, in public debates, there have been discussions on potentially abolishing the separate religious education courses and replacing it with a general non-denominational and integrative course on religion, ethics and philosophy (in Dutch: LEF, levensbeschouwing, ethiek en filosofie) (Franken & Loobuyck, 2021). From my research, it is clear that an integrative course is not desirable. Separate religious courses are important for young people's positive experience of their identities (Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel, 2018). Definitely for religious youth, it provides them a safe(r) space to learn more about their religion and to gain practical information on, for instance, how to pray. While many respondents also looked for information online, their religious classes could provide them with nuanced and correct information. In addition, for my respondents, these classes provided a safe haven to discuss their minoritized position in society. For instance, for Muslim youth, they could discuss the racism and discrimination they face, and it is important for young people to have a place to discuss this, without the need to constantly having to defend themselves and their religion. An integrative course neglects these needs, and, thus, sides with a colour-blind approach. Along with separate courses, my results do show that young people desire more exchange between the different courses. For instance, one respondent made a deal with the teachers from the different courses in her school that allowed her to switch between them all. She wanted to learn from each of them, which helped her to better understand her own religion (Islam) and here religious choices. It was, however, important for her to stay rooted in her separate Islam courses. Other respondents also discussed how they would have debates in class on religion, in which non-religious classmates often did not participated. It would be useful for the latter to have more exchange and dialogue on these topics, so that they can construct a more self-reflective non-religious identity as well. However, often in these class debates, Muslim youth felt frustrated as they had to deal with many stereotypes concerning Islam. Therefore, as already argued, a separate class remains of relevance to be able to safely discuss and learn about their religion.

Lastly, in school policies, but also generally in organizations, in the city and in political and public debates, it is necessary to deculturalize societal trends. Socio-economic inequalities and societal trends such as poverty, unemployment, etc. have become culturalized and individualized, with a focus on the links with cultural and individual elements. For instance, research has shown that teachers link lower school performances among their Muslim students to their religiosity, rather than focusing on socio-economic explanations (Van Praag et al,

2016). Importantly, this focus on cultural elements and conflicts between norms and values distracts the attention from socio-economic trends and material and political conflicts over resources and rights (for instance, unwelcome economic cuts, the housing crisis, etc.) (Alba & Duyvendak, 2017; Torrekens, 2015; Yilmaz, 2016). In public debates, much is said about 'identity' and 'wokeness' for instance, the current mayor of Antwerp has written books about both concepts, while at the same time there is an urgent housing crisis in the city and homelessness among young people has skyrocketed (Vlaamse Jeugdraad, 2023).

Multiple identities among youth

My research has also shown the importance and impact of the support of teachers, who play an important role in helping young people experiencing their multiple identities in a positive way. It may seem obvious, but there is a need for recognition and acknowledgement of the multiple identity constructions and social belongings of youth. Since the identities of ethno-religious minority students are often contested, and the compatibility of their ethnic belonging and being, for instance, Muslim with a Belgian and Flemish identity is questioned, it is difficult for these students to have a positive self-understanding. It is important for teachers to be aware that every day ethno-religious minority students have to carry out difficult boundary and identity work. To support these youngsters in their identification processes, it is imperative to recognize these different identities that are important to them. Teachers, then, should not foster processes of exclusion, by, for example, claiming that it is not possible to be both autonomous and agentive as well as being religious, or by expecting students to leave behind these identities which are important to them and to their communities. In Western European contexts, we also value expressive individualism, in which individuals emphasize their authentic identity and unique self. Therefore, Muslim youth should also be able to emphasize their authentic selves, which could be, for instance, by being religious and participating in religious practices.

In addition, it is important to be aware that existing group boundaries are most often a consequence of social inequalities and exclusion, as young people rework their stigmatized and discredited identities. In some conversations that I had with teachers, some of them blamed the young people themselves, as the perpetrators of group boundaries and exclusion processes. However, young people rather construct dignified identities for themselves, to give them a positive sense of self-worth. They need recognition of their multiple identities, and they should be able to explore and experience their identities in their fullness, without experiencing contradictions and without the need to 'give up' important aspects of themselves (see also Vandeperre, Slaats, Heens & Azabar, 2017, p. 324). Lastly, teachers and schools should also

be aware of the emergence of nativist discourses among white ethnic majority students. As they experience difficulty in giving meaning to their identities, which have become less taken for granted in superdiverse settings, these students seem more prone to extreme right-wing political discourses. Teachers could also support these young people to embrace this social change, and could provide other cultural tools to deal with this, such as repertoires on social justice.

Youth information

Lastly, I would like to suggest some questions to be tackled by the Flemish youth information platform watwat.be. This platform emphasizes young people's right to information: young people can independently access the information they need to make well-informed decisions on their lives. The platform tackles questions on all youth topics, such as mental health, sex, living alone, getting your driving licence, but also societal topics such as how to deal with discrimination and racism. First, WAT WAT should offer information on religious practice. Many of my religious respondents had difficulties finding information on, for instance, how to pray and often did not dare to ask their parents, teachers or peers, for fear of being judged. Generally, young people turn to the internet to find information (Apestaartjaren, 2022) and my respondents did this too to find information on how to practise their religion. WAT WAT should tackle these needs, as such information would contribute to a positive experience and exploration of religious identities for young people. In addition, it should include information on how to experience non-religiosity. Second, WAT WAT already provides information on, for instance, 'am I allowed to pray at school' or 'can I wear my headscarf at school'. While this information is useful, it should contain more information on what young people's rights are, such as that a headscarf ban is against the fundamental right to religious freedom and how young people, for instance, can get legal advice on this.

Conclusions and suggestions for future research on symbolic boundary work among youth

Bright ethnic and religious boundaries

My research has contributed to the literature on superdiverse settings, and how bright ethnic and religious boundaries can emerge there, with strong dominant power relations and social inequalities and symbolic othering of ethno-religious minority groups, who are denied symbolic access to the national belonging (Alba & Duyvendak, 2017; Barwick & Beaman, 2019; Beaman, 2017; Crul, 2016; Foner, Duyvendak & Kasinitz, 2019; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Torrekens, 2015; Simsek, Tubergen & Fleischmann, 2022).

I also contributed to research on how Muslims are specifically constructed as ethno-racial, cultural and religious 'Others' in Western European settings (Aydin, Fuess, Sunier & Vázquez, 2021; Aziz, 2017; Brubaker, 2017; Cesari, 2004; Fadil et al, 2014; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Foner & Alba, 2008; Modood, 2019; Ribberink, Achterberg & Houtman, 2017a, 2017b; Sunier, 2014; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016; Trittler, 2019; Zemni, 2011). Anti-immigrant stances are intertwined with anti-Muslim sentiments (Foner & Alba, 2008; Ribberink et al, 2017a; Torrekens & Jacobs, 2016), and anti-religious stances and secular identities, but also cultural Christian identities, are specifically directed and constructed in relation to Muslim identities (rather than religious identities in general) (Brubaker, 2017; Casanova, 2007; Joppke, 2018; Ribberink et al, 2017b; Trittler, 2019).

Therefore, future research should continue to study and understand how, in superdiverse majority-minority cities, longstanding social inequalities based on race, ethnicity and religion persist as powerful, and how symbolic 'Others' are constructed to uphold these power dynamics (Alba & Duyvendak, 2017; Foner et al, 2019).

In my research, I also looked at how symbolic constructions of Muslims particularly intersect with constructions on gender. Islam is often constructed as an oppressive religion for women, depicting (Muslim) women in contrast to 'free' 'emancipated' European white women. This image of 'free women' is thus often used in symbolic conflicts to legitimize the othering of ethno-racial and religious minoritized communities (Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Sauer, 2009). As Lamrabet (2017, p. 51) argues:

> '*The female body has always been used to settle wars, in the past to conquer territories, and today to enforce the so-called superior Western norms and values and to increase the distinction between 'us' and 'them'.*'

Future research should continue to understand how the female body and these constructions on gender and 'freedom' are used to legitimize and uphold categorical and social inequalities.

My study has not focused on social class boundaries. However, research has stressed the importance of also looking at the intersection of social class boundaries and ethno-religious boundaries (see, for example, Kostet, Verschraegen & Clycq, 2022a), something which is often neglected in studies on boundary work (Brubaker, 2010; Wimmer, 2013). When social class is taken into account, it is often understood to be an objective, measurable and instrumental criterion (e.g. expressed in terms of income). Yet, social class too can be studied as another social construct and as an important part of one's self-representation and other-representations

(Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018). Future research should also analyse social class boundaries and their interactions with ethnic and religious boundaries. For instance, scholars argue that anti-Muslim sentiments and mobilizations are not only manifestations of Islamophobia, but can also be key tools to maintain class dominance (Yilmaz, 2016). Even though this was not the purpose of my thesis, I did select students from different educational tracks (academic, technical and vocational), and saw that boundary processes were also at play, in which students in vocational tracks expressed feelings of stigmatization and were constructed as morally less valued. This allowed for shifts in boundaries, as students with different ethno-religious backgrounds in the vocational tracks did express a sameness due to their shared experience of stigmatization. While there has been quantitative research on this topic (e.g. Spruyt, Van Droogenbroeck & Kavadias, 2015), there has been no thorough exploration of the Belgian situation using qualitative approaches.

Young people actively negotiating boundaries

This study responded to the need within research to understand how young people brought up in these majority-minority settings experience and navigate these settings in their everyday relations and interactions (Foner et al, 2019; Maene et al, 2021; Tran, 2019). By looking at how young people participate in boundary work, our study shows that they can actively, creatively and strategically rework and negotiate the bright ethnic and religious boundaries facing them; these boundaries are therefore variable and can become blurry, contested and challenged. While ethno-religious minoritized youth have to navigate a context in which resources and opportunities are not equally accessible to them, and social categorizations impact their social opportunities and relations (Wimmer, 2013), our results show that they have to continuously, on a daily basis, engage in complex identity and boundary work. They do so by creatively drawing on and reworking existing cultural repertoires, as well as expressing these repertoires in different ways, to challenge power differentials or moral hierarchies and construct dignified identities for themselves, thus expressing individual agency in unequal social structures (Lamont, Pendergrass & Pachucki, 2015; Wimmer, 2013).

In my research, I have mostly focused on symbolic boundary work in interactions between individuals and groups. As the concepts of symbolic boundaries and cultural repertoires are also useful to understand identification processes and processes of social exclusion on various levels, it would be useful for future research to also consider, for instance, these processes on an organizational level (for instance, comparing school policies). In addition, it would be

interesting to look at how symbolic boundaries emerge in other contexts. I focused on a superdiverse city setting, but how do these boundaries emerge and how are they negotiated in, for instance, a rural context? Is there a difference between an educational context and a working environment?

White identities in superdiverse settings

In my dissertation, I not only showed how ethnic and religious minoritized youth actively negotiated their stigmatized identities; I also analysed how previously taken for granted white and non-religious identities have also become contested in superdiverse settings, and how these youth give meaning to their changing social status. In contrast to minoritized young people, who seem skilful and creative in reworking their discredited identities, I have argued that white ethnic majority youth seem 'paralyzed' and express difficulties in choosing or knowing which repertoires to draw on to make sense of their newly contested identities, making them prone to nativist repertoires. As their identities were previously taken for granted and their social positions were dominant, there has been less urgency to develop repertoires to deal with their identities being taken into question. Minoritized young people, on the other hand, are brought up with their ethnic and religious identities being a chronic object of debate and contestation, having little space for an unreflective or taken for granted identification (Brubaker, 2013).

The study contributes to the emerging call in superdiversity literature to understand how individuals without a migration background participate and need to reposition themselves in these settings (Crul & Lesie, 2023); as well as responding to the growing interest in how non-religious individuals give meaning to their identities (Strhan & Shillitoe, 2019). I also contributed to (the third wave of) whiteness studies: there has been less research in a European context on how whiteness has become a contested social category and how invisible power relations within constructed ethno-racial and religious moral hierarchies can be maintained and reinvented, but can also be contested and challenged in superdiverse settings (Twine & Gallagher, 2019). Lastly, I contributed to literature on the re-emergence of nativist and populist repertories in Western European settings (Alba & Foner 2015; De Jong & Duyvendak, 2023; Kešić & Duyvendak, 2019), specifically among youth. To sum up:

> 'We need more research examining how ethnic majority youth conceptualize their ethnic and racial identities vis-à-vis a context that delegates identity works to immigrants and their descendants under the framework of 'integration' (Moffitt et al, 2020). Of course, this should not undermine empowering research on racialized groups

and the pernicious consequences of discrimination but be seen as an important complementary missing puzzle to better understand and overcome racial and ethnic inequalities' (Jugert, Kaiser, Laluna & Civitillo, 2021, p.6).

The changing role of religion in superdiverse cities

There has been less focus on religious identities and boundaries in the literature on symbolic boundary work and superdiversity in Western European cities. My study, thus, makes a contribution to these fields, and made the connection between debates and new insights in the field of sociology of religion. My analysis shows that religion remains an important marker for identity for young people. While Muslim youth are often expected to downplay their religious identities, and their religious identity is constantly debated and contested, my analysis has shown that they find creative ways to deal with stigmatization, and maintain their religious identities and their communal participation.

Future research should look into how religion in superdiverse cities can reclaim a more public and communal role (and not a privatized or marginalized role), and how it functions as an important base for collective social identities among minoritized communities. In addition, scholars should focus on the changing role of religion in modern societies, on new forms of spirituality and religiosity, religious revival and pluralism, rather than on a historical-linear and normative belief of the disappearance of religion. Lastly, my analysis has shown that, despite the secularized appearance of Western European societies, there is a revival of Christianity as an important marker of the (sub)national imagination, specifically weaponized to legitimize the othering of Muslim immigrants and communities (Brubaker, 2017; Casanova, 2007; Joppke, 2018; Storm, 2011; Trittler, 2019). Therefore, more research is needed to understand how this revival of Christian identities in Western Europe is used to further construct and uphold categorical and social inequalities.

Youth identities as viable collective identity

While I also examined supranational identities as collective identities for youth, I noticed in my interviews that a general youth identity could also be a viable collective identity. I mostly focused on how 'coolness' was constructed between young people in order to claim a youth identity. However, some respondents also constructed a youth identity in relation to older generations (for instance, parents, teachers): this youth identity thus became accessible to all young people. Respondents would, for instance, oppose their parents' racist or more conservative views, while constructing themselves as young and open-minded, and better

adjusted to superdiverse settings (for instance, drawing on a repertoire of commonplace diversity). Other research could further investigate shared peer culture and youth identity as collective identities (e.g. Lim, 2022), and could consider how these could be shaped not only in everyday face-to-face interactions, but also through virtual spaces such as social media (e.g. Nasrin & Fisher, 2022).

A mixed-method approach

We used both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and viewed them as equal and complementary within the research process (Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Pearce, 2012; Small, 2011), thus contributing to a cooperative approach and methodological pluralism, valuing all methods in their own right (Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Pearce, 2012). Through the quantitative analysis, we were able to understand broader trends of identity formation among youth (Ağirdağ, Phalet & Van Houtte, 2016; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018; Maene et al, 2021; Maene et al, 2022), while qualitative methods allowed us to gain deeper insights into meaning-making processes and everyday lived experiences, and to grasp the active, processual and continuous ways in which individuals engage in boundary work in social interactions (Lamont & Swidler, 2014).

The quantitative studies did not reveal any variance or significant differences between schools (Vervaet et al, 2016). Future research should select more schools, so as to be able to analyse and detect such variance. The in-depth interviews did not enable us to analyse social interactions in day-to-day life, but rather gave us access to discursive data. Observations could be a better way to grasp everyday interactions. With my interviews, however, I was able to capture how students constructed their meanings in relation to myself and thus within the conversation space. In addition, I could probe the imagined meanings of activities, individuals' self-concepts and sense of self-worth, ideal responses or situations, their fantasies about themselves and others, and so on (Lamont & Swidler, 2014). Future research could use observations or more longitudinal approaches (see Kostet, 2022) to be able to analyse not only shifts in boundary work between settings, but also how boundaries change over time. While my respondents did reflect on how their meaning-making processes evolved over time, considered the past, and explained that they wished to have changed views and positions in the future, a longitudinal approach allows more to see these changes in real life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: survey in Dutch: identiteitscontructie bij Antwerpse jongeren

Onderzoek naar identiteitsconstructie bij Antwerpse jongeren

Beste jongere,

Deze vragenlijst maakt deel uit van een onderzoek naar identiteitsconstructie bij jongeren in Antwerpen. Het onderzoek probeert te ontdekken hoe jongeren van verschillende achtergronden hun identiteit omschrijven en hoe zij dit specifiek doen binnen de context van de school. Deze studie is een onderdeel van een doctoraatsproject aan het departement Sociologie van de UAntwerpen.

Waarom doen we dit onderzoek?

Wij zouden graag van jou horen hoe jij je identiteit omschrijft en hoe jij je bij bepaalde identiteiten betrokken voelt. We willen ook te weten komen hoe jij je voelt op school en hoe jij de relaties met je leerkrachten ervaart. Dit is voor jou een kans om je **stem te laten horen**! Met de hulp van jouw antwoorden kunnen wij inzicht krijgen in hoe jongeren zich identificeren met anderen en zich daarbij voelen, én krijgen wij inzicht in hoe wij het onderwijs in Vlaanderen kunnen verbeteren.

Hoe neem je deel?

We vragen je om de vragenlijst aandachtig te lezen en zo volledig mogelijk in te vullen. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 30 minuten duren. Als je een vraag niet begrijpt of je weet niet goed hoe je deze moet beantwoorden, vraag dan bijkomende uitleg aan de begeleidende onderzoeker. Zij/hij zal je verder op weg helpen.

Wie komt te weten wat je hebt geantwoord?

Jouw antwoorden zijn **anoniem** en worden met vertrouwen behandeld. Dit betekent dat ze door niemand bekeken kunnen worden, behalve door de onderzoekers. Dus ook je school, familie of vrienden kunnen deze antwoorden niet bekijken. Je kan daarom **volledig eerlijk** zijn in je antwoorden. Er zijn ook **geen goede of foute antwoorden**. We zijn geïnteresseerd in **wat JIJ denkt**.

Let op, normaal is er altijd maar één antwoord mogelijk, tenzij we duidelijk zeggen dat je meerdere antwoorden mag aanduiden.

Alvast bedankt!

School: _____

Klas: _____

Studierichting: _____

Onderwijsvorm:

☐ ASO ☐ BSO

☐ TSO ☐ KSO ☐ Andere: _____

A – Over jezelf

A1. Ik omschrijf mijzelf als:

☐ Meisje ☐ Jongen ☐ Andere: _____

A2. In welke buurt woon je?

☐ Antwerpen ☐ Deurne ☐ Merksem

☐ Berchem ☐ Ekeren ☐ Berendrecht

☐ Borgerhout ☐ Hoboken ☐ Wilrijk ☐ Andere: _____

A3. Wat is het hoogst behaalde diploma van je moeder?

☐ Geen diploma ☐ Hogeschool of universiteit (of avondschool met een equivalent

☐ Lager onderwijs (+- 12 jaar) ☐ Andere kwalificaties (bv. uit het buitenland)

☐ Lager middelbaar (+- 15 jaar) ☐ Ik weet het niet

☐ Hoger middelbaar (+- 18 jaar) ☐ Mijn moeder is overleden (sla vraag A4, A5 en A6 over)

A4. Mijn moeder:

☐ Werkt voltijds

☐ Werkt deeltijds (of 4/5de)

☐ Is werkloos (minder dan 3 maanden)

☐ Is met pensioen

☐ Is huisvrouw (sla vraag A5 en A6 over)

☐ Is werkloos (langer dan 3 maanden: sla vraag A5 en A6 over)

☐ Kan niet meer werken (invalide of ziek) (sla vraag A5 en A6 over)

☐ Andere: _____

A5. Wat is/was het beroep van je moeder?

☐ Arbeidster (met nadruk op handenarbeid, bv. werken in een fabriek, kuisvrouw, etc.)

☐ Bediende (met nadruk op hoofdarbeid, bv. veel computerwerk uitvoeren, administratie, personeelsdienst van een bedrijf,

☐ Ambtenaar (bv. leerkracht, politie, brandweer, postbode, buschauffeur bij De Lijn, conducteur bij De NMBS, vuilnisvrouw,

☐ Zelfstandige/vrij beroep (bv. advocate, dokter, bakker, kinesiste, boekhoudster, kunstenares, etc.)

☐ Andere: _____

☐ Ik weet het niet

A6. Schrijf in één zin neer wat voor soort werk je moeder doet/deed. (Bijvoorbeeld: zij geeft les in het secundair onderwijs, is hoofd van een verkoopteam, helpt de kok tijdens het bereiden van maaltijden in een restaurant, …):

A7. Wat is het hoogst behaalde diploma van je vader?

☐ Geen diploma
☐ Lager onderwijs (+- 12 jaar)
☐ Lager middelbaar (+- 15 jaar)
☐ Hoger middelbaar (+- 18 jaar)
☐ Hogeschool of universiteit (of avondschool met een equivalent
☐ Andere kwalificaties (bv. uit het buitenland)
☐ Ik weet het niet
☐ Mijn vader is overleden (sla vraag A8, A9 en A10 over)

A8. Mijn vader:

☐ Werkt voltijds
☐ Werkt deeltijds (of 4/5de)
☐ Is werkloos (minder dan 3 maanden)
☐ Is met pensioen
☐ Is huisman (sla vraag A9 en A10 over)
☐ Is werkloos (langer dan 3 maanden: sla vraag A9 en A10 over)
☐ Kan niet meer werken (invalide of ziek) (sla vraag A9 en A10 over)
☐ Andere: _____

A9. Wat is/was het beroep van je vader?

☐ Arbeider (met nadruk op handenarbeid, bv. werken in een fabriek, kuisman, etc.)
☐ Bediende (met nadruk op hoofdarbeid, bv. veel computerwerk uitvoeren, administratie, personeelsdienst van een bedrijf,
☐ Ambtenaar (bv. leerkracht, politie, brandweer, postbode, buschauffeur bij De Lijn, conducteur bij De NMBS, vuilnisman,
☐ Zelfstandige/vrij beroep (bv. advocaat, dokter, bakker, kinesist, boekhouder, kunstenaar, etc.)
☐ Andere: _____
☐ Ik weet het niet

A10. Schrijf in één zin neer wat voor soort werk je vader doet/deed. (Bijvoorbeeld: hij geeft les in het secundair onderwijs, is hoofd van een verkoopteam, helpt de kok tijdens het bereiden van maaltijden in een restaurant, …):

A11. In welk land ben je geboren? _____

A12. Welke nationaliteit(-en) heb je? (Van welk(e) landen heb je een paspoort of identiteitskaart?) **Meerdere antwoorden zijn mogelijk**.

☐ België ☐ Turkije

☐ Nederland ☐ Polen

☐ Marokko ☐ Congo ☐ Andere: _____

A13. Hoelang woon je al in België?

☐ Minder dan één jaar ☐ Tussen vijf en 10 jaar

☐ Tussen één en drie jaar ☐ Tussen 10 en 15 jaar

☐ Tussen drie en vijf jaar ☐ Meer dan 15 jaar

A14. In welke landen zijn de volgende familieleden geboren? Vul in:

	Vader	Moeder	Moeder van je vader	Moeder van je moeder
Geboorteland				
Indien ze niet geboren zijn in België: Hoe lang wonen zij al in België? (Geef aan in maanden, jaren,…)				

A15. Tot welke religieuze traditie of levensbeschouwing behoor je? **Meerdere antwoorden zijn mogelijk**.

☐ Christendom ☐ Hindoeïsme ☐ Atheïsme (ik geloof niet)

☐ Jodendom ☐ Boeddhisme ☐ Agnosticisme (ik weet niet of ik geloof)

☐ Islam ☐ Sikh ☐ Andere: _____

B – Over je identiteit

B1. We zouden graag willen weten hoe jij jezelf omschrijft. Voel je je Belg, Antwerpenaar, christen, Congolees,...? Duid met een kruisje aan hoe sterk jij je identificeert met de volgende groepen.

	Heel sterk	Sterk	Neutraal	Zwak	Helemaal niet
Belg					
Europeaan					
Een mens in het algemeen					
Vlaming					
Antwerpenaar					
Marokkaans					
Turks					
Pools					
Congolees					
Christen					
Moslim					
Jood					
Atheïst					
Andere: …….					
Andere: …….					

B2. We zouden graag willen weten hoe jij denkt dat anderen jou identificeren. Beschouwen zij jou als Belg, Pool, Turk, ...? Duid met een kruisje aan wat voor jou past.

	Helemaal wel	Wel	Neutraal	Niet	Helemaal niet
Als Belg					
Als Europeaan					
Als mens in het algemeen					
Als Vlaming					
Als Antwerpenaar					
Als Marokkaan					
Als Turk					
Als Pool					
Als Congolees					
Als vluchteling					
Als christen					
Als moslim					
Als jood					
Als atheïst					
Als blank					
Andere: …….					
Andere: …….					

De vragen gaande van B3. tot en met B8. zijn enkel in te vullen indien je je betrokken voelt tot een religieuze identiteit of groep.

B3. Hoe vaak bid je?

☐ Meer dan 2 keer per dag ☐ Een paar keer per week

☐ 2 keer per dag ☐ Eén keer per week

☐ 1 keer per dag ☐ Alleen op speciale gelegenheden ☐ Nooit

B4. Hoe vaak ga je naar de moskee/kerk/synagoge/andere gebedsruimte?

☐ Dagelijks ☐ Maandelijks

☐ Wekelijks ☐ Zelden/alleen op speciale gelegenheden ☐ Nooit (sla vraag B5. over)

B5. Waarom ga je naar de moskee/kerk/synagoge/andere gebedsruimte? **Meerdere antwoorden zijn mogelijk**.

☐ Om religieuze redenen (bv. om te gaan bidden)

☐ Om naar lessen te gaan (bv. taal, Bijbel/Koran/Thora/... les)

☐ Omdat ik mijn vrienden wil zien

☐ Omdat ik mijn familie wil zien

☐ Omdat ik moet van mijn ouders

☐ Om steun te zoeken (bv. raad vragen aan een pastoor/imam/rabbijn/...)

☐ Om speciale gelegenheden (bv. begrafenis, trouw, communie etc.)

☐ Andere: _____

B6. Druk je je religieus geloof uit op de volgende manieren? 1 = altijd, 2 = soms en 3 = nooit. Omcirkel wat voor jou past.

	Altijd	Soms	Nooit
Door het bedekken van je haar?	1	2	3
Door het dragen van religieuze symbolen (bv. juwelen, baard etc.)?	1	2	3
Door het dragen van aangepaste kleding?	1	2	3
Door geen alcohol te drinken?	1	2	3
Door bepaalde voedingsregels te volgen (bv. halal of kocher eten, geen vlees op bepaalde dagen)?	1	2	3
Door je te onthouden van bepaalde activiteiten tijdens religieuze feestdagen en dagen van rust?	1	2	3

B7. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord. **Neutraal betekent dat je geen mening hebt over die stelling, dat je noch akkoord, noch niet akkoord bent.**

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik geloof in god	1	2	3	4	5
Religieuze rituelen en tradities zijn niet belangrijk voor mij	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zie mijzelf als een religieus persoon, ook al uit ik mijn geloof niet sterk in de praktijk (door bv. niet naar religieuze diensten te gaan, niet te bidden etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel me trots als ik denk aan mijn geloof	1	2	3	4	5
Wanneer ik mij zorgen maak om iets of me nerveus voel, helpt mijn geloof mij te kalmeren	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn geloof geeft betekenis aan mijn leven	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind weinig steun bij mijn religieuze gemeenschap	1	2	3	4	5
Door mijn geloof heb ik het gevoel dat ik ergens bij hoor	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel mij sterk verbonden met mijn religieuze gemeenschap	1	2	3	4	5

B8. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik vind dat de religieuze verschillen (bv. soennitisch vs. sjiitisch, modern orthodox vs. chassidisch etc.) binnen mijn religieuze groep geen probleem zijn	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind mijn etnische identiteit (bv. Koerdisch, Turks, Berber, Pools, Belgisch etc.) minder belangrijk dan mijn religieuze identiteit	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind het belangrijker dat iemand gelooft (maakt niet uit welke religie deze persoon aanhangt), dan dat iemand niet gelooft	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind het belangrijk dat mensen van verschillende religies met elkaar praten	1	2	3	4	5

De vragen die nu volgen zijn in te vullen door iedereen. Ze peilen naar je betrokkenheid t.o.v. Europa en de wereld.

B9. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord. **Neutraal betekent dat je geen mening hebt over die stelling, dat je noch akkoord, noch niet akkoord bent.**

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik ben er trots op om in Europa te wonen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel me deel van Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben er trots op dat België lid van de Europese Unie is	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel me deel van de Europese Unie	1	2	3	4	5
Voor mij is Europa en de Europese Unie hetzelfde	1	2	3	4	5

B10. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

Europa betekent voor mij:	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Een gemeenschappelijke christelijke cultuur	1	2	3	4	5
Het hebben van een gemeenschappelijke munteenheid (de euro)	1	2	3	4	5
Het recht om vrij te kunnen reizen in de Europese Unie	1	2	3	4	5
Blanke Europeanen	1	2	3	4	5
Het hebben van een gemeenschappelijke identiteitskaart	1	2	3	4	5
De mogelijkheid om in een ander land van de Europese Unie te kunnen studeren	1	2	3	4	5
Geldverspilling	1	2	3	4	5
Culturele diversiteit	1	2	3	4	5
Het garanderen van gelijkheid	1	2	3	4	5
Het hebben van een gemeenschappelijke Europese cultuur en tradities	1	2	3	4	5
Een grote economische markt	1	2	3	4	5
Het garanderen van individuele vrijheid	1	2	3	4	5
Het hebben van een gedeelde geschiedenis	1	2	3	4	5
Dat we afstammen van gemeenschappelijke Europese voorouders	1	2	3	4	5
Het creëren van een betere toekomst voor jongeren	1	2	3	4	5
Solidariteit en sociale rechtvaardigheid	1	2	3	4	5
Het verlies van de nationale identiteit	1	2	3	4	5
Een politieke entiteit met Europese instellingen zoals het Europees parlement of de commissie	1	2	3	4	5
Het beschermen van democratie	1	2	3	4	5

B11. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik vind het goed dat de meeste Europese landen zich verenigd hebben in de Europese Unie	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind dat zoveel mogelijk Europese landen (ook diegenen die dat nog niet deden, bv. Turkije en Albanië) zich moeten verenigen in de Europese Unie	1	2	3	4	5
Ik geloof dat we een sterk Europa nodig hebben om globale problemen aan te pakken	1	2	3	4	5
Een sterk Europa is nodig om de vrede tussen Europese landen te bewaren	1	2	3	4	5
Een sterk Europa is nodig om economische groei en werkgelegenheid te realiseren	1	2	3	4	5
Een sterk Europa is nodig om met de vluchtelingencrisis te kunnen omgaan	1	2	3	4	5
Een sterk Europa is nodig om sterk te staan ten opzichte van een stijgende terreurdreiging	1	2	3	4	5
Een sterk Europa is nodig om milieuproblemen aan te pakken	1	2	3	4	5
Een sterk Europa is nodig om sterk te staan ten opzichte van grote landen zoals China, Rusland of de VS	1	2	3	4	5

B12. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik denk dat mensen overal ter wereld veel met elkaar gemeenschappelijk hebben	1	2	3	4	5
De waarden waar ik achter sta, deel ik met alle mensen, los van etniciteit of religie	1	2	3	4	5
Ik denk dat ik de cultuur van anderen evenveel respecteer als mijn cultuur	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel me in de eerste plaats een wereldburger	1	2	3	4	5
Ik denk niet dat elke mens evenwaardig is	1	2	3	4	5
Voor onze samenleving is het beter als migranten hun eigen cultuur en tradities aanpassen aan de cultuur van België en Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Het is voor mij belangrijk om tot een gemeenschap met eenzelfde etniciteit te behoren	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind dat het onze plicht is om solidair te zijn tegenover medeburgers, los van etniciteit en religie	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind dat elk mens het recht heeft om gerespecteerd te worden	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind dat iedereen zich aan elkaar zou moeten aanpassen	1	2	3	4	5
Iedereen kan voor mij een echte Europeaan zijn, maakt niet uit waar ter wereld je geboren bent	1	2	3	4	5
Iedereen kan voor mij een echte Europeaan zijn, maakt niet uit welke religie je aanhangt	1	2	3	4	5

B13. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Vluchtelingen zijn mensen net zoals wij, met dezelfde rechten en plichten	1	2	3	4	5
Het is voor mij belangrijk om tot een gemeenschap met eenzelfde religie te behoren	1	2	3	4	5
In het algemeen zou de situatie in Europa verslechteren als migranten uit niet-Europese landen zich er vestigen	1	2	3	4	5
Het is voor mij belangrijk om tot een gemeenschap op eenzelfde grondgebied te behoren	1	2	3	4	5
Een Europees land zou enkel migranten die een christelijk geloof hebben moeten toelaten om te komen wonen in het land	1	2	3	4	5
In het algemeen zou de situatie in Europa verslechteren als laaggeschoolde arbeidsmigranten zich er vestigen	1	2	3	4	5
Een Europees land zou migranten uit niet-Europese landen moeten toelaten om te komen wonen in het land	1	2	3	4	5
De aanwezigheid van veel migranten in een land betekent vaak een bedreiging voor de nationale cultuur	1	2	3	4	5

C – Over waarden

C1. Bij deze vraag krijg je een lijst van groepen en een lijst van waarden die mensen belangrijk kunnen vinden. Duid, door middel van kruisjes, **maximum drie waarden per groep** aan die volgens jou bij die groep passen.

	Belgen	Europeanen	Marokkanen	Turken	Moslims	Christenen
Gastvrijheid						
Respect hebben voor de familie						
Ieder voor zich						
Individuele vrijheid						
Gelijkheid man en vrouw						
Mensenrechten						
Verdraagzaamheid						
Gewelddadigheid						
Losbandigheid						
Goed zijn voor je medemens						
Democratie						
Vrouwonvriendelijk						
Luiheid						
Hard werken						
Strikt leven volgens de normen en waarden van de groep						
Belang hechten aan de eer van de familie						

D – Over je contacten

D1. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik ga liever een liefdesrelatie aan met iemand met dezelfde religie/levensbeschouwing	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ga liever een liefdesrelatie aan met iemand met dezelfde etnische achtergrond	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ga liever een liefdesrelatie aan met iemand die gelooft	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ga liever om met niet-Belgen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ga liever niet om met iemand die alcohol drinkt	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ga liever om met Belgen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ga liever een liefdesrelatie aan met iemand die ongeveer een gelijk opleidingsniveau heeft als dat van mij (bv. die ook BSO doet, die na het middelbaar hogeschool/universiteit gaat doen,…)	1	2	3	4	5

D2. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik leg makkelijk contact met iemand die een andere herkomst heeft als ik	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind dat religieuze mensen en niet-religieuze mensen verschillend in het leven staan	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind het makkelijker om te gaan met mensen uit mijn eigen woonbuurt	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind het belangrijk dat mijn vrienden ongeveer evenveel geld hebben als ik, zodat we dezelfde activiteiten kunnen doen (bv. shoppen, uitgaan, voetbal kijken, chillen op het pleintje, …)	1	2	3	4	5

E – Over je school

E1. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik heb het gevoel dat er genoeg aandacht is voor thema's zoals culturele diversiteit, in de lessen op school	1	2	3	4	5
De school heeft een duidelijk beleid over multiculturalisme	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb het gevoel dat de school voldoende evenementen organiseert rond thema's zoals etnische en religieuze diversiteit	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind dat de school geen rekening houdt met de feestdagen van de religieuze groepen in de school	1	2	3	4	5
De school voorziet ruimtes om te kunnen bidden of andere religieuze activiteiten uit te voeren	1	2	3	4	5
Ik kan voor de lessen godsdienst een les kiezen die aansluit bij mijn religieus geloof of levensbeschouwing	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb het gevoel dat er in de school gepraat kan worden over verschillende culturele achtergronden	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn school helpt mensen van verschillende etnische of religieuze groepen om elkaar te begrijpen	1	2	3	4	5
In deze school kunnen niet alle studenten praten over hun eigen visies	1	2	3	4	5
In deze school kunnen de studenten leren over de visies van andere mensen of groepen	1	2	3	4	5

E2. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik krijg regelmatig les over de Europese geschiedenis	1	2	3	4	5
Ik krijg regelmatig les over de Europese instellingen zoals het Europees parlement of de Europese commissie	1	2	3	4	5
In de lessen wordt regelmatig gesproken over de toekomst van Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Ik krijg regelmatig les over multiculturalisme en diversiteit in Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Ik krijg regelmatig les over solidariteit tussen mensen in Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Ik krijg regelmatig les over mensenrechten zoals gelijkheid en vrijheid	1	2	3	4	5
Ik krijg regelmatig les over de Europese cultuur en waarden	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn school biedt genoeg mogelijkheden (bv. reizen, projecten etc.) om in contact te komen met andere Europeanen	1	2	3	4	5

E3. Waar of bij wie ga jij informatie zoeken en leer je bij over de volgende thema's? Geef aan met een kruisje. **Meerdere antwoorden zijn mogelijk**.

Over:	In de lessen op school	Op het internet	In boeken	Bij mijn ouders	Bij mijn vrienden	Bij een imam/pastoor/rabbijn	Bij mediabronnen (krant, nieuws)	Ik vind nergens informatie	Ik zoek geen informatie op
België									
Europa									
De islam									
Het jodendom									
Het christendom									
Mijn etnische afkomst									
De buurt waar ik woon									
Andere:_____									

E4. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik voel me echt een deel van deze school	1	2	3	4	5
Wanneer ik ergens goed in ben, wordt dit op school opgemerkt	1	2	3	4	5
Mensen als ik worden op deze school moeilijk aanvaard	1	2	3	4	5
Ik kan mijzelf zijn op school	1	2	3	4	5
Soms heb ik het gevoel dat ik niet op deze school pas	1	2	3	4	5
Wanneer straffen gegeven worden op school, zijn deze gelijk voor iedereen	1	2	3	4	5
De school gaat mij niet helpen bij het verbeteren van mijn toekomst	1	2	3	4	5

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
De school geeft mij het gevoel dat ik erbij hoor	1	2	3	4	5
Niet iedereen wordt gelijk behandeld op school	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel me veilig op school	1	2	3	4	5

E5. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
De meeste leerkrachten bevoordelen studenten van hun eigen etnische of religieuze groep	1	2	3	4	5
De meeste leerkrachten op school zijn niet zo geïnteresseerd in mij	1	2	3	4	5
De meeste leerkrachten luisteren naar wat ik te zeggen heb	1	2	3	4	5
Studenten worden door sommige leerkrachten gediscrimineerd vanwege hun etnische of religieuze groep	1	2	3	4	5
De meeste leerkrachten motiveren mij zodat ik mijn uiterste best kan doen	1	2	3	4	5
De meeste leerkrachten beschouwen leden van andere etnische groepen onterecht als onruststokers	1	2	3	4	5
De leerkrachten op school respecteren mij	1	2	3	4	5
Wanneer ik slechte punten krijg, is dat omdat de leerkracht me oneerlijke punten geeft	1	2	3	4	5
Ik kom niet goed overeen met mijn leerkrachten	1	2	3	4	5

E6. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik kan mijn leerkrachten dingen in vertrouwen vertellen	1	2	3	4	5
Als ik mijn leerkrachten over een probleem vertel, zullen zij mij waarschijnlijk de schuld geven	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn leerkrachten proberen te begrijpen hoe ik me voel wanneer ik met hen spreek	1	2	3	4	5
Als ik problemen heb met mijn schoolwerk, kan ik mijn leerkrachten om hulp vragen	1	2	3	4	5

E7. Hoe vaak heb in je dagelijkse leven het gevoel dat je oneerlijk wordt behandeld?

☐ Nooit

☐ Af en toe

☐ Regelmatig

☐ Vaak

☐ Heel Vaak

E8. Op basis waarvan word je vooral oneerlijk behandeld? **Meerdere antwoorden zijn mogelijk**.

☐ Huidskleur ☐ Weinig geld thuis ☐ Taal ☐ Geslacht

☐ Geloof ☐ Uiterlijk ☐ Etnische (culturele) afkomst ☐ Studierichting

☐ De buurt waar ik woon ☐ Seksuele voorkeur ☐ Handicap ☐ Andere reden: _____

☐ Niet van toepassing (sla vraag E9 over)

E9. Heb je het gevoel dat die oneerlijke behandeling soms gebeurt op school? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik heb het gevoel dat leerkrachten mij anders gaan behandelen door deze kenmerken	1	2	3	4	5
De meeste leerkrachten beoordelen mijn schoolprestaties op basis van deze kenmerken	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb het gevoel dat leerkrachten al mijn gedrag beoordelen aan de hand van deze kenmerken	1	2	3	4	5

E10. Zou je jezelf omschrijven als een lid van een groep die gediscrimineerd wordt?

☐ Ja ☐ Nee

F – Over hoe jij je voelt

F1. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Over het algemeen ben ik tevreden met mijzelf	1	2	3	4	5
Soms denk ik dat ik nergens goed voor ben	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb het gevoel dat ik niet veel eigenschappen heb om trots op te zijn	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben een waardevol persoon, evenwaardig aan anderen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik wou dat ik meer respect kon hebben voor mezelf	1	2	3	4	5
Ik kan de dingen even goed als de meeste anderen	1	2	3	4	5
Al bij al voel ik me een mislukking	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel me soms nutteloos	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb een positieve houding tegenover mezelf	1	2	3	4	5

F2. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik vind het moeilijk om aan te geven bij welke groepen ik me thuis voel	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb het gevoel dat ik de keuze moet maken tussen verschillende groepen (bv. Belgen, Marokkanen, Polen, moslims etc.) om ergens bij te kunnen horen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel me uitgesloten van bepaalde groepen (bv. Belgen, Marokkanen, Polen, moslims etc.) waar ik bij wil horen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik wil geen keuze maken tussen verschillende groepen	1	2	3	4	5

G – Over je gedrag op school

G1. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Ik wil mijn best doen op school	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ga mijn groepskenmerken verbergen, omdat ik vrees dat ik daardoor oneerlijk behandeld zal worden	1	2	3	4	5
Het is wel al eens gebeurd dat ik een leerkracht wilde pijn doen omdat ik me oneerlijk behandeld voelde	1	2	3	4	5
Ik vind het belangrijk om goede punten te halen op school	1	2	3	4	5
Ik wil mijn best doen op school, maar ik doe het zelden goed	1	2	3	4	5
Het is wel al eens gebeurd dat ik een leerkracht verbaal aanviel (bv. door te schelden) omdat ik me oneerlijk behandeld voelde	1	2	3	4	5
Vroeger deed ik mijn best voor school, maar nu niet meer	1	2	3	4	5
Het is wel al eens gebeurd dat ik een leerkracht probeerde te overtuigen van zijn/haar ongelijk wanneer ik mij oneerlijk behandeld voelde	1	2	3	4	5

H – Over je familie

H1. In welke mate ben je akkoord met onderstaande stellingen? Omcirkel wat voor jou van toepassing is. 1 = helemaal akkoord, 2 = akkoord, 3 = neutraal, 4 = niet akkoord en 5 = helemaal niet akkoord.

	Helemaal akkoord	Akkoord	Neutraal	Niet akkoord	Helemaal niet akkoord
Mijn ouders hechten veel waarde aan het doorgeven van hun gewoonten en tradities	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn ouders vinden dat wij respect moeten hebben voor alle verschillende culturen in België en Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn ouders staan open voor verschillende (culturele) visies	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn ouders vinden het belangrijk dat ik een lief heb die van dezelfde groep als ons is	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn ouders vinden het goed dat wij in Europa leven	1	2	3	4	5
Met mijn ouders praat ik regelmatig over de Europese Unie	1	2	3	4	5
Met mijn ouders praat ik regelmatig over culturele diversiteit in Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Met mijn ouders praat ik regelmatig over de werking van democratie in Europa	1	2	3	4	5
Met mijn ouders praat ik regelmatig over de Europese cultuur en waarden	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn ouders hebben vertrouwen in de jobmogelijkheden die Europa creëert	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn ouders vinden dat Europa op religieus vlak oorspronkelijk christelijk moet blijven	1	2	3	4	5

Dankjewel voor het invullen van de vragenlijst!

Appendix II: Semi-structured topic list in Dutch

Introductie

- Voorstelling van het onderzoek
- Het interview is anoniem en wordt in vertrouwen verwerkt.
- Er zijn geen juiste of foute antwoorden: het gaat om jouw mening en ervaringen.
- Je mag eerlijk zijn en vanuit jouw gevoel vertellen. Ik heb geen oordeel.
- Als iets niet duidelijk is, mag je dat zeker zeggen. Je moet ook niet op alles antwoorden.
- Het gesprek wordt opgenomen.

Verkenning

- Vertel over jezelf: wie ben je, wat doe je in vrije tijd, wat doe je met vrienden?

School

A. Ambitie en motivatie

- Hoe is het op school?
- Wat zijn je ambities?
- Geloof je dat onderwijs belangrijk is? Heb je vertrouwen?
- Voel je je gemotiveerd voor school om bv. te studeren?

B. Reflecteren

- Hoe is je schoolcarrière geweest? Verschil nu en vroeger?
- Meer/minder motivatie? Waarom?
- Zelfde school/andere school?

(Niet-)Religieuze ervaring/beleving

A. Beleving:

- Zie je jezelf als (niet-)religieus?
- Hoe belangrijk is dat voor jou?
- Wat betekent het voor jou om [Moslim, Christen, niet-religieus, etc.] te zijn?
- Sta je erbij stil dat je [Moslim, Christen, niet-religieus, etc.] bent? Wanneer speelt (niet)-religie een rol? Wanneer komt het naar boven? Hoe komt het tot uiting?
- Wat vind je goed aan [Moslim, Christen, niet-religieus, etc.] zijn/wat niet?

B. Gevoelens:

- Hoe voel je je erbij?
- Wat maakt u trots/wat niet?
- Voel je soms schaamte?

C. Anderen: [Zelfde groep waarmee zij zichzelf hadden omschreven]

- Voel je je op je gemak bij andere [Moslims, Christenen, Niet-religieuzen, etc.] (bv. vrienden of familie)?
- Kan je jezelf zijn bij hen? Waarom wel/niet?
- Ben je anders dan andere [Moslims, Christenen, Niet-religieuzen, etc.]

D. Anderen: [Waarmee zij zichzelf niet hadden omschreven]

- Wat vind je van andere geloven zoals [Moslims, Christenen, niet-religie.]?
- Denk je dat jij anders reageert dan [Moslims, Christenen, niet-religie.]?

Goede Moslim / Christen [Enkel aan deze respondenten gesteld]

- Situatie: x vertelt in de klas hun mening over wat een 'goede' [Moslim, Christen] is. Achteraf ziet een klasgenote dat die drinkt en feest. Dat vindt de klasgenote hypocriet.
- Wat denk je daarover?
- Kan iemand een 'goede' [Moslim, Christen] zijn als die niet praktiseert? Bv. niet bidden, drinken?
- Is er iets zoals een 'goede' [Moslim, Christen]?
- Hoe doe jij het? Wat weet je van anderen?
- Geeft dat idee van de 'goede' je stress of rust?
    - Streef je daar naar?
    - Waarom streef je wel/niet naar dat doel?

Vrienden (en grenswerk)

- Hoe ziet je vriendenkring eruit?
- Met wie ga je graag om? Bij wie voel je je vooral op je gemak?
- Ben je anders dan je vrienden? Op welk vlak? Op welk vlak gelijkend?
- Ben je anders bij de ene dan bij de andere?
- Zou je je op je gemak voelen bij…? Heb je de neiging om … te vermijden?

- Wie zijn je vrienden binnen & buiten school?

Identiteit en grenswerk

A. Sociale identiteit

- Je krijgt verschillende kaartjes met allemaal identiteiten op. Er zijn ook lege kaartjes zodat je zelf kaartjes kan aanvullen. In het midden ligt een mandarijn, dat ben jij. Je mag de kaartjes in een cirkel rond de mandarijn plaatsen. Welke identiteiten liggen dichtbij jou? Welke liggen wat verder?
- Vertel me wie jij bent? Waarom heb je de kaartjes zo gelegd?
- Wat betekenen die identiteiten voor jou? Voel je je trots?
- Wat maakt de ene identiteit belangrijker/betekenisvoller dan de andere?
- Staan er identiteiten soms in conflict voor jou? Wanneer voel je dat/wanneer niet?
- Voel je je soms uitgesloten van bepaalde identiteiten?
- Hoe kijken anderen naar jou? Heeft dat invloed op hoe jij naar jezelf kijkt?

B. Grenswerk

- Bij wie / welke groepen voel je je het meest op je gemak?
- Bij wie / welke groepen voel je je minder op je gemak?
- Kom je goed overeen met anderen die in iets anders geloven dan jij?
- Stelling: Ik kom wel met iedereen goed overeen, maar soms lachen we wel eens met [groep die zijzelf benoemd hebben bv. Flamands]
- Hebben anderen een andere manier van doen, praten of humor dan jij en je vrienden?
- Hoe praten anderen hierover?
- Hoe komt dat concreet tot uiting (bv. op de speelplaats)?
- Zou je samen kunnen zijn met iemand die iets anders gelooft dan jij?

Stigma en discriminatie

- Kom je goed overeen met je leerkrachten? Geloven ze in jou? Motiveren ze je? Onderschatten ze je? Hebben ze respect voor jou?
- Stelling: “Ik heb het gevoel dat ik harder wordt aangepakt door leerkrachten omwille van mijn afkomst/religie.” Of “ik heb het gevoel dat anderen harder worden aangepakt door leerkrachten omwille van hun afkomst/religie”.

- Heb je het gevoel of een ervaring dat je oneerlijk behandeld werd? Zie je dat bij anderen? (binnen en buiten school)
- Heb je het gevoel gehad dat je: geen respect kreeg, onderschat werd, over het hoofd gezien, opzij gezet, gevoelens van wantrouwen?
- Wat voelde je?
- Hoe ging je ermee om? (verdedigen, hard werken, beschermen, negeren,…)?
- Heeft dit invloed op hoe jij je identificeert (als bv. Belg, moslim, etc.)?

Onderwijsrichting

- Vignette: Leerlingen gaan op uitstap naar Lille, BSO-klas gaat niet mee. De leerlingen hebben het gevoel dat ze 'opzij worden gezet'.
- Vignette: De leerlingen van ASO en BSO komen niet goed overeen. ASO wordt onterecht gezien als 'de strevers'. BSO onterecht als de 'dommere' & 'probleem kinderen'.
- Wat vind je van leerlingen in ASO/TSO/BSO
- Gaan leerlingen van de verschillende richtingen met elkaar om?
- Worden mensen anders behandeld door leerlingen/leerkrachten o.b.v. hun studierichting?
- Wat doen de negatieve reacties met u zelfbeeld? Trots? Schaamte? Hoe voel je je erbij?
- Wat is het belangrijkste om te verdedigen: BSO vs. religie?

Appendix III: Author contribution

Chapter 5 (Sub)national and supranational identity among majority and minority youth in superdiverse urban schools

Noel Clycq: Preparing research, drafting and revising the manuscript.

Ariadne Driezen: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, feedback outline, revising the manuscript.

Gert Verschraegen: Feedback outline, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 6 Religion and everyday cosmopolitanism among religious and non-religious urban youth

Ariadne Driezen: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, drafting and revising the manuscript.

Gert Verschraegen: Feedback outline, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Noel Clycq: Feedback outline, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 7 Negotiating a contested identity: religious individualism among Muslim youth in a superdiverse city

Ariadne Driezen: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, drafting and revising the manuscript.

Gert Verschraegen: Feedback outline, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Noel Clycq: Feedback outline, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 8 In search of a cool identity: how young people negotiate religious and ethnic boundaries in a superdiverse context

Ariadne Driezen: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, drafting and revising the manuscript.

Noel Clycq: Feedback outline, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Gert Verschraegen: Feedback outline, critical revision of the manuscript.