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Professional identity and religious identity. Inter-minority solidarity among future social workers

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Professionele identiteit en religieuze identiteit. Solidariteit tussen minderheden bij maatschappelijk werkers in spe

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This article provides an overview of the survey which shall be the subject of a book to be published in 2018: *De la religion que l'on voit à la religion que l'on ne voit pas. Les jeunes, le religieux et le travail social*, Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles (accepted/in press).

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Framework

- ¹ This article is based on a survey regarding the connections between professional identity and religious identity, among young people studying to become social workers. In the framework of a research partnership with the *Institut Supérieur de Formation Sociale et de Communication* (ISFSC),¹ a corpus was established by means of semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty-two students (on a voluntary basis). For the most part, this involved women aged 22 to 25 who had an immigrant background or who were descendants of immigrants (mainly from Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa).²

The data used regarding them were taken from interviews which I conducted between February 2015 and June 2016 at the school. The reason for choosing the school as a field of investigation – and at the same time, as co-initiator of the project – is based on the following, among others: it was one of the rare higher education institutions in Brussels to allow the Islamic headscarf to be worn, which is a sign of inclusion with respect to Muslim students. At the same time, this educational approach has the effect (unsurprisingly) of creating a pull factor with respect to this specific population. The institution has become a *de facto* social laboratory where cultural heterogeneity is being tested.

- 2 Brussels youth are the subject of many works which point out the phenomenon of a strong duality which they are subject to in the capital: a city with ethnic segregation from a social and educational perspective (where secondary and higher education institutions are concentrated) and a multicultural city (a product of past and recent migrations) [Kesteloot, Vandermotten *et al.*, 2001; Jacobs and Swyngedouw, 2000, Verhoeven *et al.*, 2007; Ouali, 2004; Jacobs *et al.*, 2007; Jacobs and Rea, 2007; Rea *et al.*, 2009; Vaesen, Wayens *et al.*, 2014; Sacco *et al.*, 2016]. In this context, the ties between young people are very strong and are based on identity – with reference to the local level (municipality, neighbourhood) and ethnic origin [Rea, 2007; Nagels *et al.*, 2009; Mazzocchi 2011, 2012; Jamouille and Mazzocchi 2011; Kolly, 2012, 2015a, 2015b]. The present study focused on an emergence of subjectification which has been virtually unexplored with respect to the evolution of these inhabitants of Brussels: that of religious identity – defined here as a mode of ethnic identity in Fredrik Barth's interactionist perspective [1996 (1969)].³ This type of qualitative study, which focuses on the religious variable (in its connections with migratory pathways), seems to me to be particularly useful given the lack of ethnic statistics in French-speaking Belgium [Rea and Jacobs, 2008] and quantitative data on religious affiliations in national statistics [Dassetto, 1997; Torreken, 2007].

1. From visible religion...

“When someone sees me, they think, okay, this girl is wearing a headscarf. After a discussion, for example, it seems as though the person is thinking, ‘Ah, you’re a little bit different from the others. You’re alright. It’s okay. You’ve got brains. You’re not like the others.’ The reasoning is: you are not like the others; you are integrated. What they mean is: you are Belgian and the others are not.” (Rania, aged 24, Algerian and Belgian, considers herself to be Muslim, wears a headscarf, parents arrived in Brussels when she was 13 years old)

- 3 It emerged from the interviews conducted with all of the future social workers – both “Muslim” and “non-Muslim” – that when there is a link between professional and religious identities, the image of the “veiled woman” appears to be an inescapable *problem*. This image is the subject – as revealed by the corpus of interviews – of a series of identity attributions, falling under three types of accusation, namely: being an obstacle to gender equality, non-neutrality and being an obstacle to the freedom of expression. As it were, it *does not comply with the implicit standard regarding a “good social worker”*. This standard shows through in the inductive analysis of the interviews with the future professionals in the panel, as an inverted mirror on the three types of accusation: the *good social worker* is required to exercise the equality of treatment between users, including the equal rights of men and women and the respect for the

freedom of expression. In the typical excerpt highlighted above, Rania states that she always notices a suspicious attitude towards her veil.⁴ Conversely, she feels that the absence of the headscarf⁵ or even the disqualification of the religious symbol represents a guarantee of integration, which the symbolic access to the category of national depends on: *“A North African woman who does not wear a headscarf or who is against the headscarf is a proper Belgian.”*⁶ One of her classmates, Sarah (Moroccan and Belgian, parents immigrated from Morocco), goes further in this sense: by not wearing a headscarf, she appears to be a liberated woman, as a counterpoint to the “veiled woman”. *“‘Islam = terrorism’. ‘Woman with a veil = submissive woman’. Yet all of the girls I see here are totally fulfilled. Under the veil, there is me. It’s the same thing. It’s the same girl, who likes taking care of herself and enjoying herself. It’s the same thing.”* Sarah’s reactions also represent an ambiguous response to stigmatisation. Her criticism of the racialisation⁷ of the veil – and the invalidation of the equation “veil = alienation” – comes with a sort of confession that she is benefitting from the privileges related to the dividing line between veiled and unveiled, and knowing how to be on the right side of the inter-ethnic boundary. *“I am Moroccan, but not visibly. That is what people have always told me. I’ve always been the westernised girl, the girl who goes unnoticed. I think it was a little bit intentional.”*⁸

- 4 The body of the ethnicised woman is, according to sociologist Danielle Juteau [Juteau, 1996], a symbolic stake – a battlefield: from the author’s point of view, conquering it or controlling it would mean conquering or controlling the reproducibility of the standards and values of mainstream society. In other words, these mothers and wives bear the weight of an insidious question: will they uphold the standards of the ethnic group or adopt the majority model?

- 5 The analysis of the interviews in our corpus reveals that this dividing line is recognised by the students interviewed, as well as the areas of friction which it creates. They would have to deal with the reproaches of feminists who see them as an illustration of a reversal of fortune of past struggles, as well as the grievances of the “community” – with the current context of the stigmatisation of Muslims making the “anti-headscarf” position all the more a sign of betrayal.

“It is mainly the feminists who are somewhat against religion, because they feel that a woman should be independent, etc. And we feel the same way. But it’s normal that when a person doesn’t know about something or doesn’t know what they are talking about, they might say things which are unfair. But sometimes we let teachers say what they want, just to avoid an argument.” (Chaïma, aged 21, Moroccan and Belgian, considers herself to be Muslim, wears a headscarf, grandparents immigrated from Morocco, bilateral labour agreements⁹)

“Yes, it creates tension within the community. To continue with the example of the girl who is against the headscarf, she is considered as a traitor by her peers. People will say that it is a betrayal.” (Rania, idem)

- 6 These areas of friction are certainly the result of a negative perception of the bodily symbol (“veil = alienation”). But beyond this symbolic register, the tension experienced by students is sustained by the concrete ways in which the obvious signs are regulated in the areas of education and employment. They feel that the non-access to entire sectors of the market related to social work, in particular, in the public services – through the intervention of internal regulations – is proof of their negation by the dominant ideology.¹⁰

- 7 Denouncing the simplistic character of the equation “veiled woman = submissive woman = non-neutral”, all of the interviewees (not only Muslim)¹¹ speak of the multiple meanings of the veil, as well as its various uses (expression of spirituality, fashion statement, strategy with respect to parents, sign of modesty, sign of humility, etc.) and the various profiles of its users (oppositional, militant, hard-line, pluralist, conformist, defensive, pious, humanist, altruistic, etc.). The analysis of the material thus shows that the veil is becoming less essentialised by and through the interactions among young people. The veil seen from a European perspective, i.e. reduced to the status of a visible symbol of alienation and/or non-neutrality, contrasts with the multiple perceptions which young people have of it. It takes on complex meanings formed in unique and changing inter-personal references – in such a way that the image of the veiled woman is deconstructed, no longer able to be confined to a fixed category.
- 8 Finally, a last type of accusation is directed against Muslims – following the interviews with the panel of students – in the context of the tragic Charlie Hebdo attack (7/1/2015):¹² the non-respect for the freedom of expression. The perception and the experience of identity attributions is always based on the social, historical and spatial contexts in which they are accepted and circulate. The students consider the media coverage of the terrorist attacks in Europe to be the vector *par excellence* of the acceptance and circulation of an essentialised Islam (like the recent works on the “spectre of radical Islam” [Puaud, 2016]; or on the “attacks as unstable media subjects” [Landivar, 2016]). According to the interviewees, the fact that there were so many televised reports and Belgian and French documentaries had the effect of intensifying the negative image of Islam significantly. This critical interpretation is not unrelated to a series of contemporary works characterised by a dialectic between global narrations and local perceptions [Kundnani, 2015; Burgat, 2016] whereby the culturalist effects of political and media rhetoric are denounced, which, by defining Islamist ideology – or even Islamic thought in general – in opposition to European values, contributes to sustaining the Islam/Europe dichotomy (re)opened by Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilisations [Huntington, 1997].
- “It’s as though we had to say that we were Charlie to show good faith, otherwise we were considered to be on the other side. Otherwise, people assumed, ‘So you are on the side of the killers, you are against the freedom of expression, you are not good Belgians or good Europeans’.” (Rania, idem)
- “I never felt that I was Charlie, not even for one second. I agree with the freedom of expression, but what I didn’t like about ‘I am Charlie’, was the idea: What is it that jeopardises the freedom of expression? Muslims. That basically summed it up. Everything was centred on the nasty Muslims.” (Annie, < age 25 (N/A), Belgian without an immigrant background, considers herself to be agnostic and raised in a Catholic family)
- 9 In the eyes of young people, to a large extent the statement “I am Charlie” therefore acted as a catalyst in the clash of civilisations. But the performativity of the utterance (“I am Charlie”) with respect to the challenges of young inter-ethnic categorisations goes further: the boundary drawn by “I am Charlie” leads to the reorganisation of inter-minority identities. The coverage of the attacks by the traditional media caused the internalisation of another “minorities vs majorities” dialectic among sub-Saharan young people, this time based on a dividing line between Africans and Europeans and, by extension, a split between non-Europeans and Europeans. In addition to being understood as an expression of the denial of Islam (Islam vs western world), the assertion “I am Charlie” refers to a disproportionality between Europe and the rest of

the world, with regard to violence and wars as well as the media coverage they receive. In the case of a series of interviews, for example, students refer to their background as immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Africa (Cameroon, Congo, Burundi) to underline the unusual character of the proximity of terrorism to Europeans, which would place the latter at the opposite extreme of the situation in Africa. It is in view of this difference in experiences that the category of “African” is used by some in positioning themselves with respect to the statement “I am Charlie”.

“The fact that people say: ‘Yes, we are Charlie’ – I don’t know. Of course, people died. That is very sad. But there were many other massacres behind that one which have not received media coverage, for example. Therefore, I didn’t think: ‘I am Charlie’. All of the media and major television channels in France and Belgium, TF1, RTL, etc., made it into a state matter. They covered it for weeks. In France there were not as many of them, yet it received much more media coverage than what is happening in Africa.” (Oda, aged 24, Belgian, born in Brussels, considers herself to be Catholic, mother immigrated from Congo, father mixed Belgian/Congo ethnicity)

- 10 The young people who are marked by this difference in Belgian and French national television media coverage – which is at the origin of a sense of devaluation of the lives of humans “from those places” – appear to be aware of the logic of distance and proximity (“closer = more important”) in media headlines. Nevertheless, the difference triggers an exaggerated need to assert oneself through one’s African heritage with respect to what is perceived as an Africa/Europe dialectic.

2. ... to invisible religion

- 11 The analysis of the empirical data led to a questioning of the capacity of the veil – as an obvious symbol – to draw attention to visible religion to the detriment of its invisible manifestations. The fixation on the Islamic veil places more committed religious positions in the shadow of imposed identities. What were we able to conclude – based on the interviews – regarding the rationale behind self-development (as a subject) with a religious basis? And, moreover, what are the conclusions made with respect to possible intersections between religious and professional identity profiles? By saying that they are religious, do social workers consider themselves to be different from others? Do they direct their actions differently? Do they relate to religious ethics?
- 12 Before answering these questions, it is necessary to specify that the religious positions of young people are expressed in a context of the secularisation of society or what is commonly referred to as the “disenchantment of the world” [Weber, 1964 (1904-5), 1971 (1919)] or the “exit of religion” [Gauchet, 1985] – with the advent (of the idea) of the self-supported individual. When Catholic and Muslim students say that faith is a factor in the commitment to social action, they say it in a social context of expressed disillusionment: the interviews convey young people’s clear internalisation of this loss of the influence of Christian standards, symbols and rites in our secularised societies (*“Catholicism is in decline”, “religion is a bit of a taboo in Europe”*). This religious reference does not at all challenge the professional values taught in the courses, but on the contrary, the combination of sources of normativity is observed. They refer actively to discussions which have taken place in class with teachers regarding changes in the situation of social work – contractualised assistance, logic of empowerment, individualised treatment, post-disciplinary and managerial model for the management of social work, social supervision of users and professionals [Castel, 2009; Franssen,

2005] – which are responsible for endangering the founding values of the profession and, first and foremost, the respect for persons. Faith as a factor in the commitment to social professions must therefore be added to the “aspects of the identity case” of young people without denying the vectors of career building: the socialisation of students in the framework of a higher education institution, the appropriation of professional ethics and professional culture, recognition among peers, etc.

- 13 Through this preliminary observation of identity syncretism among students, the survey allows us to conclude that there is a religious ethos in professional conduct (among young Catholics as well as Muslims). Faith is experienced here “as ‘belief in action’ and not only as an ‘approval of a proposal which is presumed to be true’ [Engel, 2006: 225]” [Lamine, 2013: 38]; it is not only a matter of interiority, but calls upon affects and values (the love of God and of others, the crucial character of helping others, the sacred character of showing respect for others, the gratifying nature of *hassanet* – i.e. “good actions”) which are the source of actions and the relationship with others. Religious faith stimulates action which is strengthened by confidence in its good purpose: in this sense, it represents a tendency to act which may be of an advantage professionally in providing service to the public. The corpus of interviews thus shows that there is a supra-human influence on social matters for many young people – Muslim and Catholic – with the result of embellishing these matters (in their eyes).

“Sometimes on a Sunday, I wake up and I feel like going to church, so I do. There (in Ecuador), it was nice to go to church: we sang, we laughed, we danced – it was joyful. Here, there are only elderly people, the songs are sad and there is no harmony. And what is religion? It's about helping others, respect, love, etc. And for a social assistant, it's the same thing.” (Rosana, aged 25, Ecuadorian, considers herself to be Catholic, parents immigrated from Ecuador when she was 12 years old, asylum seekers, regularisation in 2010)

“The human being with a capital H has needs which cannot be denied, such as the need to be loved, the need to be kind to someone. I connect that with faith, as God created us with these natural and existential needs which are essential to life. Life is a whole. God is there in everything you do. He is not just a Sunday God.” (Patricia, aged 31, Cameroonian, considers herself to be Catholic, immigrated from Cameroon when she was 24 years old, asylum seeker)

“My brother says to me: ‘Do you know how much *hassanet* (i.e. good actions/ points) the social assistant has? Someone who helps every day? Can you imagine what that represents for our religion?’ What does my brother mean by that? Well, it means that it is a job which is in keeping with what my religion asks me to do. And that is what is complete.” (Chaïma, *idem*)

- 14 But we may observe outlines of differentiated religious subjectification, according to whether young people consider themselves to be Muslim or Catholic. The fixation on the obvious religious symbol represented by the Islamic headscarf results in the hypervisibility of veiled girls, which causes others to benefit from relative invisibility: the more we notice Muslim women, the less we notice Christian women (we are less interested in them). The latter are aware of this “reversed” relationship of visibility as well as the marginal character of Christian faith and practice in Brussels today and, finally, of the opposite evolution of Islam, which is expanding rapidly.

MK: “Do you have the impression that faith is something which is misunderstood in European society?”

Angela: “The fact that there are not many churchgoers left in Europe means that, to them, it's as though believers are from another planet. They do not understand how we can be devoted to God to the point that we do what He says and follow Him. So

therefore, yes, I do think so. The fact that there is not a belief in something which does not exist. (...) Faith is very taboo. (...) In certain religions, nothing happens, they're dead (laughter), no conflict, no interest, nothing. So people tend not to speak about religion anymore." (Angela, aged 27, Belgian, considers herself to be Catholic, parents immigrated from Cameroon when she was 11 years old)

- 15 The panel reflects Catholicism which is mostly "imported", as it is linked to immigration (South America and especially sub-Saharan Africa). The question may therefore be raised as to whether the status of Christianity – majority religion, yet *downgraded* in highly secularised European societies – explains a dual confession which is heard over and over again from sub-Saharan students: that of having an elastic relationship to Christian standards but, at the same time, that of striving to reduce these gaps in a Belgian environment where the weakness of religious ties (and moral "permissiveness") prevails. Conversely, there is a more indirect, subtle and discreet reference to religion by Muslims (most of whom are Belgians with an immigrant background dating back to their grandparents). I feel that this difference must be related to a hypothesis of self-censorship and/or self-defence resulting from the racialisation of the Muslim religion – clearly detectable in the interviews. In other words, stigmatised Islam gets the upper hand over Islam as it is lived. On the other hand, the discussions with students outline the minority and controversial status of Islam in Europe. In this context, the mechanisms of "community validation" [Hervieu-Léger, 1993; Lamine, 2013] are far from being fluid and consensual, and on the contrary reveal strong tensions.

"I am quickly bored with religious debates. I'm not really interested. Even between students. People feel the need to justify themselves, as though they are afraid of what others might think. In the debates, I don't always feel that they are saying... ummm... For example, if there is a debate with non-Muslims, they will start to embellish a crazy religious thing, whereas between Muslims it's different. I don't like it. Be honest, that's all." (Lina, aged 22, Moroccan and Belgian, considers herself to be Muslim, wears a headscarf, grandparents immigrated from Morocco, bilateral labour agreements)

- 16 But beyond variations in subjectification, religious ethics are significant to all of these young people who are believers and who practise their religion. What about the issues which go against the religious morals of those concerned (the most predictable ones being abortion and homosexuality)? In the vast majority of cases, the answers to the question regarding interference between religious ethics and social intervention are guided by a requirement for moral restraint, as religious morality must not get in the way of providing assistance to users. However, the corpus of interviews revealed a few isolated cases in which moral conflict was an obstacle to intervention (*"I preferred not to intervene and handed the case over to a co-worker"*). These could be referred to as borderline cases, whereby the dialectic between professional ethics and religious affiliation is not enough to ensure the efficiency of social intervention. Even if they are never expressed in these terms, these morally difficult situations could justify the right to "conscientious objection". The question is raised as to whether or not, in future, the exercising of the right to conscientious objection – both systemic and more circumscribed – represents a good way for these future workers to get out of difficult situations. In this perspective, would it make sense to teachers and students for this right to be the subject of discussions in the framework of social worker training? It is probably worthwhile to assume that the "problematization" of these areas of tension –

i.e. the choice to confront them as such in order to control them fully – could at least serve as a valuable theoretical and practical tool.

Conclusion

- 17 A large proportion of Brussels youth are characterised by extreme cultural diversity, resulting from heterogeneous migratory pathways from yesterday and today, which may be at the origin of asserted religiousness. This takes place in the dualistic urban environment of Brussels with a segregated education system, where it is common to build relationships based on the ethnicisation of inter-youth categories. Among these young people, there are veiled women (*visible religion*). The processes of *racialisation* which they are the subject of (“veil = alienation”) – based on a bodily symbol – lead them to critical reappropriations without necessarily meaning that these identity arrangements can guarantee that they may evolve serenely in their professional pathways as women. The equation “veil = alienation” – and more globally, the negative perception of Islam – has prompted a revival of inter-youth discussions (between Muslims and the other students in the social worker programme), with the equation being contested by all, whereas its continued existence is puzzling. The veil seen from a European perspective, simplistic and reified, contrasts with a multi-dimensional veil which is becoming less essentialised and whose meanings are built by many young people in Brussels based on singular and changing inter-personal foundations.
- 18 Following the attacks which took place in Europe – and in particular, the successive attacks in 2015 and 2016 in France and Belgium – these discussions highlight the media coverage which young people feel is responsible for spreading a negative image of Islam. In particular, in this context, the statement “*I am Charlie*” is interpreted as having amplified the “clash of civilisations”. Moreover, the statement leads to the reorganisation of inter-minority identities. The coverage of the attacks (which happened in Europe) by the traditional media leads to the internalisation of another dialectic among sub-Saharan students, this time based on a dividing line between Africans and Europeans and, by extension, between non-Europeans and Europeans. This is internalised based on a parallel feeling of minorisation among Muslims and Africans, i.e. of the devaluation of human life south of Europe – a feeling which is caused by the perception of a difference in the media (Europe vs the rest of the world). It may be observed that young people's interpretations of the rhetoric (which is considered as hegemonic) regarding *Charlie* convey forms of transnational subjectifications at the global and local crossroads.
- 19 While the visible symbol of the veil draws attention to visible religion – in a context in which it is considered a social stigma – it does so to the detriment of more committed religious positions in the shadow of imposed identities (*invisible religion*). The data related to faith are thus silenced in a context of marked ethnicisation and racialisation of religion. However, Catholic and Muslim young people present faith as a factor in the commitment to social action, being fully aware that their positions are being expressed in a context of “disenchantment of the world”: to support this assertion of the influence of religious ethics on professional commitment, they call on values such as the love of God and of others, the crucial character of helping others, the sacred character of showing respect for others, and the gratifying nature of *hassanet* (“good actions”). This religious emergence must be seen at the heart of the identity hybridity

of young people without denying professional self-construction: on the contrary, the relationship to faith and religious practice *are transferred onto* intellectual and technical tools which are already highly developed among individuals at the end of their studies. Religious faith acts as a driving force behind a tendency to act (aiming at an ideal and a desire to transcend), which may be of an advantage professionally in providing service to the public. Religious subjectification and professional subjectification overlap in a similar manner for all of the believers, as religious values are injected into the ethos of social assistants, but differentiating elements intervene in the modes of subjectification among young Catholics and Muslims – highly dependent on the opposition between majority religion and minority religion, or religious visibility and religious invisibility. As religious ethics are significant to all of these young people who are believers and who practise their religion, the issues which go against religious morals raise questions regarding the connections between the respect for neutrality, doing one's job and religious devotion. On this matter, for most students, the presence of a dialectic between professional conscience, empathy towards the user, self-denial and going beyond religious conscience seem to constitute the key to the success of an intervention – “borderline cases” are an exception, however, and it would be useful to view them from the perspective of “conscientious objection”.

- 20 In conclusion, in the current situation in Brussels, favourable conditions exist for the reinforcement of minority and inter-minority conscience among Brussels youth with an immigrant background, which is coextensive with the critical internalisation of a series of dualisations (western world/Islam; European/non-European youth; believers/non-believers; Europe/Africa; Europe/outside Europe). From then on, the risk of a future reinforcement of these dividing lines (in keeping with the principle of building collective identities) can only be counterbalanced – according to the results obtained in the framework of our survey – by the recognition of the particularities and multiple transnational loyalties of these young people and the awareness of the *biased views* of the western world which they may bring about.

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NOTES

1. The survey was conducted in the framework of a collaboration between USL-B and ISFSC (Danièle Peto, director of the centre for research), thanks to the financial support of the Fondation Bernheim.
2. This involved a corpus of approximately 30-35 hours. The panel of 22 interviewees was composed of 20 women and 2 men. There were 4 atheists or agnostics and 18 believers and churchgoers. Among the latter, 9 were Muslim (1 M/8 F) and 9 Catholic (1 M/8 F). Of all of the people interviewed, there were 3 Belgians without an immigrant background and 19 immigrants or descendants of immigrants: 9 descendants of immigrants of the "2nd or 3rd generation" (Morocco, Congo), 10 immigrants, 6 of whom had arrived as children and 4 of whom as adults (Cameroon, Burundi, Ecuador, Mauritania, Somalia, Algeria). Let us add that 15 people were of Belgian nationality (12 of whom were immigrants or descendants of immigrants).
3. In the interactionist paradigm of Fredrik Barth, "ethnic groups" are the result of "processes of selection of cultural traits which people turn into criteria for attribution to or identification with a group" [Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, 1995: 141; Martiniello, 1996, Rea and Tripier, 2003, Bastenier, 2004]. It is therefore out of the question to reify stable cultures which are already there, *in abstracto* – without inter-personal, social and historical support – and instead involves knowing where, when, with and between whom the cultural differences are used.
4. The analysis involves Muslim future social assistants in our panel who talk about *immediate* experiences of the three types of accusation – i.e. their own experiences in which they are the subject of negative identity attributions – and is based on a theoretical and methodological postulate stipulating the heuristic value of "minority views" [Guillaumin, 1972, 1977, 1981, 1985; Juteau, 1999, Jounin et al., 2008; Chassain et al., 2016]. According to this postulate, we may take an interest in the perspective of minorities and, according to Colette Guillaumin, the expression of the "anger of the oppressed", [Guillaumin, 1981] as it provides privileged access to social order and power structures. These experiences – singled out specifically by the students in our panel among their many daily interactions – must be analysed from the point of view of a series of critical theorists in the area of domination [Hartsock, 1983; Collins, 1986; Smith, 1982; Spivak, 2009] as a source of knowledge which is "informed" by power relations (knowledge which results from experiencing them). I became interested in the ways in which these young Muslim women took on and spoke of the identity attributions of which they are the subject.
5. Note that the terms "veil" and "headscarf" are used as synonyms by the people interviewed.
6. Thus said, Rania illustrates the major analysis by Abdelmalek Sayad regarding the torments of *insoluble* immigrants in the category of national, even once they have been naturalised, with symbolic access being conditioned and conditional. According to the author, this phenomenon is symptomatic of the intrinsic link between immigration and the official line [Sayad, 1999].
7. Ethnicisation and racialisation are processes which are both similar and distinct. While the first concept refers to social relationships in which "ethnic categories constitute referents which

determine action and interaction” [Jounin et al., 2008: 10], the second one qualifies a radicalised form of ethnicisation. Ethnic categories are therefore no longer only determinant referents but become an ultimate determination. According to the authors, “as a radicalised mode of ethnicisation, racialisation absolutises differentiation according to origin and culture, and makes it into an immutable and definitive category; it involves an ultimate explanatory principle [Guillaumin, 1977; De Rudder 1991, Fassin and Fassin, 2006]” [ibid.: 12]

8. These observations are in keeping with those of past Belgian works carried out on the joint issues of the stigmatisation experienced by “Muslim women”, the internalisation of identity attributions and the responses to these [Brion, 2000, 2004; Bracke and Fadil, 2011; Fadil 2011, 2014]. The convergence of past and present observations allows us to conclude that there is a continuation or even an intensification of these processes of symbolic inferiorisation.

9. Belgian and Moroccan agreement of 17.02.64 related to the employment of Moroccan workers in Belgium.

10. While the principle of neutrality applies to all civil servants in Belgium [Dumont & Delgrange, 2008] so as to guarantee the respect for the diversity of beliefs among citizens, there is no legislation prohibiting ideological signs, in particular the Islamic headscarf. However in reality, in almost all schools, this ban exists for both teachers and students (as well as in higher education institutions and administrations).

11. Contrary to the Muslim interviewees who spoke of experiences in which the focus was on their “own bodies” – we may therefore speak of an *immediate* experience – the non-Muslim students spoke of the focus on *the others* (the “veiled” women) as outside observers; outside observers who confirm/invalidate, attest to or, on the contrary, bring into perspective the statements of Muslim women, based on what they see and hear, as part of a *non-immediate* or *mediate* experience. These valuable contributions to the empirical material make it possible to match information and sources (inside/outside sources) on the subject of the “headscarf issue”.

12. The attack against *Charlie Hebdo* was a terrorist attack against the satirical magazine on 7 January 2015 (on the release date of an issue with a cartoon of Mohammed on the cover) by individuals claiming to be part of Al Qaeda (AQPA). Most of the victims of the shooting were journalists who were part of the editorial staff (8 out of 12 people). This attack was followed by the killing of 4 people during a kosher supermarket siege (8 January) by an accomplice of the first attackers. These attacks had considerable repercussions in France as well as abroad: demonstrations showing support in many French cities and around the world, “a Republican march” in Paris (on 11 January) gathering approximately 40 heads of state and millions of people rallying in the city over several days. Several million copies of what was referred to as the “survivors’ issue” were printed.

ABSTRACTS

In Brussels – a city subject to duality from a socioeconomic point of view and with ethnic segregation from an educational perspective – a proportion of its youth are characterised by cultural heterogeneity resulting from (past and present) migratory pathways, which may be at the origin of asserted religiousness. Based on approximately twenty interviews with future social workers, I have brought out a cross-cutting “perspective of minorities” (according to C. Guillaumin), of young descendents of sub-Saharan and north African immigrants, both Catholic and Muslim. Whether it is the image of the “veiled woman”, the circulation of the

statement “I am Charlie” or the compatibility between religious faith and social work, the corpus of interviews brings out inter-minority solidarity built as a counterpoint to internalised hegemonic rhetoric.

A Bruxelles – ville dualisée d’un point de vue socio-économique et au marché scolaire ethno-ségrégré – , une part des jeunesses se caractérise par une hétérogénéité culturelle résultant de trajectoires de migration (d’hier à aujourd’hui), trajectoires qui peuvent être à la source de religiosités affirmées. Sur base d’une vingtaine d’entretiens avec de future-s intervenant-e-s du social, je fais émerger dans ce papier une « parole minoritaire » (i.e. au sens de C. Guillaumin) transversale à des jeunes descendant-e-s de migrant-e-s subsaharien-ne-s et maghrébin-e-s, catholiques et musulman-e-s. Qu’il s’agisse de l’image de la « femme voilée », de la circulation de l’énoncé « Je suis Charlie » ou de la compatibilité croire religieux/travail social, le corpus des interviews fait apparaître des solidarités interminoritaires construites en contre-point des discours hégémoniques intériorisés.

In Brussel, een stad met een duidelijke tweedeling op sociaaleconomisch vlak en etnisch gesegregeerd onderwijs, kenmerkt een deel van de jongeren zich door een culturele heterogeniteit als gevolg van migratietrajecten (van verleden tot heden), die ten grondslag kunnen liggen aan uitingen van geloofsovertuiging. Op basis van een twintigtal interviews met maatschappelijk werkers in spe laat ik in dit artikel de transversale “woorden van minderheden” (d.w.z. volgens de betekenis van C. Guillaumin) naar boven komen, meer bepaald van jongeren die (klein)kinderen van Sub-Saharaanse en Maghrebijnse migranten zijn en waarvan een deel moslim en een deel katholiek is. Of het nu gaat om het beeld van de “gesluierte vrouw”, de verspreiding van de slogan “Je suis Charlie” of de verenigbaarheid van geloofsovertuiging en sociaal werk, uit het corpus van interviews komt de solidariteit tussen minderheden naar voren, die in schril contrast staat met het verinnerlijkte hegemonistische discours.

INDEX

Keywords: religions, youth, racism, muslims, gender

Trefwoorden godsdiensten, jeugd, racisme, moslims, gender

Mots-clés: religions, jeunesse, racisme, musulmans, genre

Subjects: 3. démographie – immigration – société multiculturelle

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