The Drama of Social Identities: How second-generation Muslims in the Czech Republic cope with otherness and negotiate their acceptance

Zuzana Rendek

Abstract

This paper focuses on the identity construction of second-generation Muslims in the Czech Republic. This generation consists mainly of young Muslims who are the descendants of migrants who came to Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1990s as part of student and labour migration. Their socialization took place in the context of their Muslim family, but they were primarily socialized in the Czech environment. Thus, second-generation Muslims move between several cultural frameworks, transnational fields located in the space in-between. They negotiate their identity situationally and must cope with their parents' country of origin, ethnicity and national identity. Through these interviews of second-generation Muslims, I would like to show how these young people with a migratory experience treat ethnicity when reporting on their otherness and what strategies they apply when negotiating key social identities. I created this data based on semi-structured interviews.

Contact

Mgr. Zuzana Rendek, Katedra antropologie, Fakulta humanitních studií, Univerzita Karlova, Pátkova 2137/5, 182 00 Praha 8 – Libeň, Czech Republic; e-mail: Zuzana.Rendek@fhs.cuni.cz.

I imagine it like a river, and on one side there is Arabic culture and on the other there is Czech culture. And I want to swim on both sides, but I do not know where to place myself. (Latifa, 18 years old, Syria/ Palestine, Czech Republic/United Arab Emirates)[1]

Introduction

One of the current trends in migrant studies has become what is called the second generation (Fadil 2019), i.e., the descendants of migrant families. This also applies to studies on European Muslims. However, the term has been criticized for placing young, European-born Muslims in the endless zone of 'nonbelonging' (Sayad 1999 in Saada 2000; Silverstein 2005). Such authors do not agree with reproducing a view that perceives this generation as "stuck" between two opposing cultures. Many studies address the problem and ask who the people born into Muslim families with migratory experiences are. They ask what identities are at stake and how they are established and negotiated. They take into account the social contexts in which young Muslims find themselves. The present study also sets itself this task and focuses on negotiating the identity of young Muslims from the second generation in the Czech Republic.

The term "second generation" in the literature

Although some authors perceive the second generation as in a state of being either "in between" identities (Levitt 2009; Richter – Nollert 2014) or as being "within" this or that identity (Barros – Albert 2020), Seeberg and Goździak (2016) have a different view and emphasize that such people do not live "between" two identities. These authors unpack the concept of the second generation and instead term them "young people with a migrant background". They do not think of them as people who are placed between two cultures or identities and trying to abandon the concept of identity. On the contrary, they see them as navigators passing through the possibilities that social reality offers them. Boland (2020) or Bhabha (1994 in Rapport and Overing 2000) talk about hybridity, about creating hybrid identities. The state in which social actors find themselves is situational; specific situations evoke certain actions that emphasize the participants, activate them, and lead them to consider and reassess their identities.

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1 The countries of origin of the informants' parents are given here in brackets. If only one country is listed, then both parents have the same country of origin; if the countries are separated by a forward slash, it indicates that one parent has more than one origin. The names of the informants have been changed.

The Context of Muslims in Europe and in Czech Republic

Reflections on the position of young Muslims in the Czech Republic relate both to the situation in Western Europe and to the profile of Muslims in Czech society. One might ask why I do not relate Muslims from the Czech Republic to Muslims in Eastern Europe.[2] There are two reasons; first, the position of young Muslims from migrant families is still mainly reflected in the literature on the situation in Western European countries. The other reason is that in the Czech Republic, local media and public officials relate Muslims to the geopolitical area of multicultural countries in the West, an association that is reflected in the processes of their identification. However, the Muslim position in the Czech Republic is diametrically different from the western area, as I state in the section *Muslims in the Czech context*.

Muslims in Europe

Of the 25 million Muslims in the 28 European Union countries, young Muslims make up a significant proportion of the total population, around 5% (Europe's Growing Population 2016). However, in the context of migration, Muslims are neither globally welcomed nor privileged migrants, and young Muslims are globally referred to as the 21st-century proletariat (Bayat – Herrera 2010). Both the 1.5 generation[3] and the second generation of Muslims in Europe are also often linked to radicalism[4] or unmanaged integration. The western literature reports that the second generation is stigmatized, associated with terrorism, and is undergoing an identity crisis (Leiken 2012; Bayat – Herrera 2010; Roy 2004; Kabir 2012; Crul – Schneider – Lelie 2012; Kepel 2006).

However, due to the vast diversity among these Muslim youngsters' countries of origin (or their parents' countries of origin), as well as the diversity of their cultural, economic and social capital, their chances for a successful professional life or further integration into society also vary.

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2 **Egdunas Račius, who deals with Islam in Eastern Europe, has recently pub-** lished two studies: *Islam in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Between Churchification and Securitization* (2020) and *Muslims in Eastern Europe* (2017). However, these publications do not examine the phenomenon of young Muslims or the second generation.

3 Authors Portes and Rumbaut (2011) define the 1.5 generation as migrant children aged 6–12 who began their socialization in their country of origin but will complete it in their host country. The socio-cultural context of these children is therefore quite specific.

4 https://migraceonline.cz/cz/e-knihovna/co-vede-k-radikalizaci-evropskych-muslimu

On the one hand, young Muslims live in multicultural European countries where there are large communities of Muslim migrants, often grouped on the basis of ethnicity. These migrants and their descendants often come from the former colonies of European countries and live in big city suburbs, partly in excluded localities and social ghettos, and they face stigma and the proverbial "glass ceiling" as a consequence. In the context of the second-generation Muslim identity crisis, Mustafa (2017) or Leiken (2012) explain the anger of young Muslims in response to pressure stemming from the expectations of their parents, the religious community, and the majority society. On the other hand, this characteristic does not apply to American Muslims (who are not just migrants from the Middle East, with the exception of those who are African Americans[5]), who are more or less integrated, create enclaves, and can be said to live more prosperously than the average American (Leiken 2012: 178).

Muslims in the Czech context

Muslims in the Czech Republic differ significantly from those in other European communities in terms of their origin, socio-economic status or social capital. Those who are the migrant Muslim parents of the second generation came to the Czech Republic in two gradual waves of migration, in the 1970s[6] and 1990s, to study or to work. Today, their children represent a second generation that is relatively ambitious. Such parents consider education one of the most important values they want to give to their children. The (non-Black) American Muslims' integration success is comparable to the situation in the Czech Republic (Topinka 2007), where a large number of migrant Muslims participate in civil society, go to the polls, and keep up with events in mainstream society (Bürgerová 2015). So far, no group of Muslims sharing a common country of origin has significantly predominated in the Czech Republic (Topinková – Topinka 2016).

The subject of Islam and Muslims is no longer as highly topical or frequently discussed in the Czech public space as it was during the migration crisis (2015, 2016), and due to the current pandemic situation, it has largely moved into the environment of Internet discussions (Černý – Rendek 2021). However, Islamophobic discourse is still present in the public space and is

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5   African American or Black Muslims are not so successful in the US; they face double stigmatization being Black and Muslim (Khalifa – Gooden 2010).

6   In the 1970's, mainly people from the Arab countries that were friendly with what was called the socialist bloc during the Cold War (Syria, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Palestine) predominantly studied medicine, architecture, engineering, etc., in Czechoslovakia (Mendel – Ostřanský – Rataj 2007).

considered normal (Dizdarevič 2019). Like Muslims elsewhere in Europe, Czech Muslims are struggling to face the pressure from society to explain who they really are (Janmohamed 2016), and it is possible they still have to apologize for actions unconnected to them personally.[7]

Czech studies of Muslims

Daniel Topinka was the first to mention second-generation Muslims in the Czech space (2007). He describes the complicated placement of the second generation between two life contexts, the family and the school. Switching between the two worlds may or may not lead to an individual experiencing internal conflict (Topinka 2007: 89–90). Topinka and his colleagues also discuss the second generation in the chapter *"Muslimové o sobě a o nás"* [Muslims Speak of Themselves and of Us] (Čermáková et al. 2016: 299–359). They describe the second generation as successfully integrated into Czech society; these young people have adapted the model of their religious faith to Czech social conditions, as their life in the Czech Republic must connect different worlds and realities. If Muslim youth were to experience Czech society negatively, that could cause the risk of integration problems which could result in absolutizing their religious or ethnocultural identity (Čermáková et al. 2016: 344).

The second study on young Muslims in the Czech Republic was authored by Jiráčková, Kramáreková and Kolárová (2017). It focuses on identity construction in the categories of religion, intergenerational and partner relationships, relationships at school and work, leisure, and plans for the future. However, their sample of young Muslims includes informants with diverse migration backgrounds – the 1.5 generation, the second generation, foreign nationals with just a two-year stay in the Czech Republic (with the prospect of staying longer), and also converts to Islam. Each of these groups has a specific relationship to Islam, has been socialized under different conditions, and has had a different experience with the Czech environment. Therefore, drawing conclusions from such a diverse sample can involve numerous biases. The sample just specifies the age of the respondents and their faith. The authors do not describe how many second-generation informants are in the sample. According to their findings, the descendants of Muslim migrant families have

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7 Černý, Karel. 2020. Radikál v české mešitě. Muslimům vadí dvojí metr, už je nebaví neustále odsuzovat světové události. *Lidovky.cz* [on-line]. [2020-12-11]. Dostupné z: https://www.lidovky.cz/relax/zajimavosti/radikal-v-ceske-mesite-ceskym-muslimum-vadi-dvoji-metr-uz-je-nebavi-odsuzovat-svetove-udalosti. A201210_172238_ln-zajimavosti_rkj&h=6B07E26EC3E9390EBFBBA4FCA28 AE811

a looser relationship to Islam than do their parents. However, they respect their parents and do not revolt against them. At the same time, these young people are basically interpreted by the authors as having adapted to Czech society and as preferring it. Nevertheless, the authors describe most of the participants in the research as defining themselves as Muslims, primarily. Research focused exclusively on the second generation has not been conducted before in Czech conditions. Therefore, the present contribution is crucial. It deals only with second-generation informants born in the Czech Republic as the descendants of Muslim migrants.

This article is structured along two thematic axes which frame the position of these informants in the Czech, or rather, the European area and support the interpretation of their statements. The first axis is the image of second-generation European Muslims in the literature, or rather, the discourses associated with this generation. The second axis is ethnicity, which is crucial in the context of the nation-state and plays a role in constructing otherness, or rather, in constructing ethnic identity.

Identity

Our social identity is defined by our membership in a group with whom we consciously identify, for example, an age cohort or ethnic group ("I am Czech/Syrian"). According to Tajfel's theory of social identities (1974), this identification is an attempt at a positive self-concept and comes from the need to achieve a positive self-image (Tajfel 1974: 72). A consequence of negotiating group identities is maintaining the boundaries between the groups. One's own in-group and the alien out-group become counterparts, and one cannot exist without the other. Muslims are, in public discourse, referred to as European "others" (Shaker – van Lanen – van Hoven 2021) and, as such, are confronted with their otherness in the Czech Republic as well. Therefore, they are looking for ways to cope with this attributed otherness and to move from the out-group into the in-group.

Types of social identities, such as ethnic or racial or religious identity, become more important in situations where people are "reminded" of them (Trusinová 2015) – for example, if a different identity is visible, as is that of a Muslim girl or woman wearing a headscarf in the classroom. In addition, ethnic identity has a strong cultural and political dimension; in modern society, it is a tool for identifying closeness and difference (Gellner 1993), or rather, the essence of the imagined community (Anderson 2016), i.e., the imagined membership in the national whole.

In addition to their religious and migration experience (through the story of their parents' migration), ethnicity is a crucial aspect of social identity

that plays a role for my informants. According to classical authors, ethnicity (Barth 1969; Eriksen 2012) lies in knowledge and practices. It is a type of relationship associated with the construction and reproduction of boundaries which are negotiated based on cultural elements. In other words, if we take ethnicity as a starting point for a type of social identity, we come into a space occupied by shared sociocultural practices, a hotbed of actors' interactions where the boundaries of ethnicity, in Barth's terms, are constructed as relationships resulting from the negotiations or transactions among these actors.

The aim of the research

The aim of this paper is to find out what contexts are important to negotiating social identities, how the informants understood their religious and ethnic identities, and how they negotiated them. According to some authors, religious identity is primary for Muslims (Ramadan 2015; Roy 2004). Other authors declare ethnicity as the primary identity, for example Zajícová (2015) writing about the Chechen community, or Rahimi (2021) who concentrated on young Afghans. The experience of these young people is pluralistic, and I would therefore like to find out how these types of social identities intersect or apply. These young people live different lives, and there are situations where they primarily reflect their religious identity. However, they also describe events and relationships where their ethnic or racial identities played a role and had to be dealt with somehow.

Methodology

I would like to emphasize at the outset that the conclusions presented here apply only to my informants and are not a generalization that would apply to all second-generation Muslims in the Czech Republic. The research was designed as qualitative, given the depth of the observed phenomenon and its uniqueness (its inductive-idiographic character). This type of research emphasizes the emic perspective: How the actors themselves view the situation, how they understand it, and how they interpret the world around them (Novotná 2019: 278). I combined data creation methods, using participatory observation and semi-structured interviews that took place from September 2019 to April 2021. I used segmentation and coding methods to interpret the data (Heřmanský 2019).[8]

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8   Segmentation is a procedure by which we divide the analysed text into subparts of what is called the analysis unit. The thematic units are parts of the text that deal with an identified topic. We then assign a label to the created segments to characterize them as part of the coding (Heřmanský 2019: 429–430).

I entered the field through repeated visits to the mosque in Prague's Černý Most district and other prayer houses in Prague, Teplice and Pilsen. It might seem that the sample would therefore consist of religiously-organised Muslims. However, I met a minimum of young Muslims and almost no girls in these religious institutions. The informants whom I was contacting were the loved ones of these initial contacts, whether they were parents, acquaintances or friends. I also gained contacts through social media or from Muslims with whom I have contact from previous research. The snowball sampling method worked here in just a few cases, for informants from Syria. The other young people I met did not have a sufficient network of peer contacts within the second generation of Muslims. That is why I repeatedly visited the prayer houses to gain further contacts.

The construction of the research sample does not confirm that these people associate around religious institutions. Rather, it suggests that these informants know somebody or have someone around them who uses forms of organised religiosity. The vast majority of my informants also said they only visited prayer houses during important religious holidays.[9]

The conditions for the selection of the informants were that they perceive themselves as Muslims, that they were born in the Czech Republic, and that at least one of their parents had a migratory origin. I processed 20 interviews with second-generation informants in this study. I met people from Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, U.A.E., the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa, and post-Soviet republics.

Many informants come from families of university students, which means their parents can be considered economically secure. The young people themselves have studied in prestigious fields such as healthcare, law, diplomacy, architecture or design. Except for two informants who work as a bartender and a saleswoman, respectively, these young people will be choosing socially-valued work in the future, thus fulfilling the principle of social reproduction within the family. Except for one Muslim woman who was 35 years old, my informants were between the ages of 16 and 26. Half come from a mixed marriage where the mother is Czech.

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9   Holidays such as *Eid al-Fitr* – the feast of breaking the fast in the month of *Ramadan* – and *Eid al-Adha*, the Feast of Sacrifice. Women are not obliged to go to the mosque otherwise and usually do so only during these holidays.

Young Muslims in the Czech Republic and the treatment of social identity

> *Everyone took me as a Muslim girl at high school, so when someone talked to me, it was just about Islam, it's like if someone is in a wheelchair and you only have the idea that the person is in a wheelchair, and if they do something, they did it just because they are in a wheelchair and you just focus on the fact that the person is in a wheelchair. And whatever I did, it was clear to them that I did it because I was a Muslim girl, no one wanted to talk to me about my hobbies, it took an awfully long time for someone to get over it, to see me as a normal person.* (Zahra, 21, Yemen, Czech Republic)

The majority society in the Czech Republic identifies Muslims with their religious identity, which is visible among girls who wear the headscarf; non-Muslim peers ignore the Muslim girls' other social identities. We can say that they are stigmatised. According to Goffmann (2003), stigma is an all-pervasive social process, and what is considered "normal vs. stigmatised" are not so much people themselves as the opinions that are formed in social interactions. From the above quotation, it is clear how difficult of a starting point young Muslims have to overcome in order to become socially relevant to their peers. The stigma here creates impenetrable boundaries, and maintaining them confirms the relationship of the minority within the in-group. The relationship between the minority and the majority is power-asymmetric; the majority here determines who belongs to the minority (Brubaker 2004: 64–87 in Jenkins 2008). However, below I will discuss how informants negotiate their religious identity and what place it occupies in their lives against the background of their other social identities.

"Is religion everybody's business?"

The life of Muslims in Europe – in the West – involves faith in a form that is individualised (Roy 2004; Jeldtoft 2011). Olivier Roy describes this inclination towards a faith that is individualised among Muslims as a process of westernization, a shift from the collective to the individual. Believers make their own decisions about faith and must also formulate for themselves what it means to be a good Muslim, as the daily reality in which they live creates problems[10] (Roy 2004). The importance of religious

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10 For example, should a Muslim man shake hands with a woman, go on a date with a non-Muslim, use a credit card? (Roy 2004: 175)

identity was emphasized in these interviews. Informants referred to Islam as self-fulfilment, as the meaning of life, as order, as anchoring, and as finding their place in life. They saw their faith as a moral foundation for good behaviour, a way to become a better person. "*Islam means everything to me; it gives me something to do all day.*" (Karima, 16, Chechnya)

Some have an emotional attitude towards faith; they do not consider theological knowledge to be important. Being Muslims and living like Muslims does not apply to their interpretation of Islam or their religious practices, yet for them religious identity is the centre of their lives, it is habit.

> *This is just the way I'm happy. That's how you feel inside, your way. One feels that it's right, what one does… I think I should wear a headscarf, but I can't tell you exactly why, I'm not exactly a learned person in these things.* (Nadžma, 24, Tunisia, Slovakia)

Some informants prefer an individualised form of faith, which is accompanied by a reconfiguration of what it means to be a pious Muslim. What is changing is their relationship to religion, not the religion itself (Roy 2004: 29). Individualised faith is, therefore, a prerequisite for one's personal interpretation of it. The informants also approached the interpretation of the Qur'an with critical reflection. It is clear, from their statements, that what matters is one's own individual relationship with God, not what is passed on within organised religiosity.

> *Sometimes I drink alcohol, and there is the injunction to 'avoid alcohol', but it's not just 'avoid alcohol, period'. God did not give us rules to follow them blindly. He also gave us a brain and we have to use it.* (Latifa, 18, Syria/Palestine, Czech Republic/U.A.E.)

> *What can I tell you, no one prays five times a day. What I do with my faith is between me and God.* (Youssef, 18, Syria, Turkey)

Although the behaviour of Muslim youth is somehow guided by their religious identity, in various situations it is not the only axis of their lives. It follows from the quotation below that some informants do not think about their identities hierarchically, but have multiple senses of belonging and hybrid identities.

> *Like, sure, I'm Czech, and at the same time I'm Yemeni, and at the same time a Muslim, and at the same time a feminist, and these are things I'm fighting for, and that is not in dispute for me.* (Zahra, 21, Yemen, Czech Republic)

Deterritorialized Islam versus Islam as a family inheritance

The religious dimension of young Muslims sometimes conflicts with the cultural register of their parents' faith (Roy 2004; Nökel – Tezcan 2005; Kabir 2012; Hamid 2017). The country of origin plays an important role in religious transmission. Parents pass on their faith to their children and often lead them to Islam through layers of cultural traditions from their own countries, although these customs are not necessarily related to Islam. I identified these same attitudes in my research sample.

> *I know more about Islam than my parents, and sometimes we argue about it. […] traditions complicate Islam.* (Jasmina, 19, Dagestan)

> *These are the traditions that are associated with Islam, but are not Islamic. For example, that a woman has to do as a man says, that a woman can't go out. So that's something I fight against a lot.* (Zahra, 21, Yemen, Czechia)

From these quotations, we could conclude that these children oppose their parents' cultural Islam. This is actually a case of deculturised Islam, i.e., the desire for an "authentic" faith, beyond the culture of social traditions, that stands in contrast to what is called ethnic Islam[11] (Roy 2004). At the same time, these youth occupy an in-between position when negotiating their Islamic identity in the context of the modern society in which they live and at the same time in relation to their parents. Roy (2004) connects these processes of deculturalisation and deterritorialization[12] with individualised faith. Religion here is not practised as a collectivity of the religious *ummah*, but as a private matter.

Nadia Jeldtoft (2011) perceives unorganised forms of religion as those associated with individualism and pragmatism, emphasising autonomy and personal experience. This is in line with the previously-mentioned fact ascertained when recruiting informants, that young Muslims are looking for forms of association other than organised religious institutions.[13]

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11 Ethnic Islam draws on customs and social practices typical for one's country of origin; ethnicity is the central category and takes precedence over religious identity. Afghan religiosity is an example.

12 Deterritorialized Islam – the religion is separate from cultural and normative registers, accompanied by a re-interpretation of religious practice (Roy 2004).

13 **For example, the time of common prayer on Friday at 1:30 p.m. is an argument against association within organised religious institutions.** Most of the informants are high school or college students, and the mosque in Černý Most is more or less on the outskirts of Prague.

For example, they form small informal groups in both online and offline spaces (e.g. on Facebook and other social networks, they take trips, etc.). Part of their religious practice is the rejection of their family's Islam, the norms and practices traditional in their own family. They read the Qur'an and watch Imams' sermons on YouTube.[14] The search for their individual way of practising Islam moves along an axis that requires adapting Islam to the contemporary lifestyle of modern society (see Latifa's quote above).

However, not all informants follow the path of individualised faith. Some accept their family's forms of Islam, which means it is their family that has contributed to their faith. They understand faith as an inheritance they received from their parents and respect it in the same way as their relationship with their parents.[15]

> *My family and that religion is something my Dad suggested to me, and I believe it. […] I'm raised like this, as it is a family, and I'll do what Dad wants.* (Kamal, 18, Syria/Palestine, Syria)

> *My parents led me 100 per cent to Islam […] I have the advantage that I am reconciled to it myself. […] I would not want to lose that relationship […] not that they would force it on me, like, I want it myself, so I have such an advantage.* (Hafida, 17, Algeria)

Although the informants are in agreement with their parents, this does not mean they are passive recipients of their religious inheritance, as the statement below confirms:

> *I never just accept what someone tells me, I think it through. I certainly understand some things differently from my parents, but I wouldn't argue with my parents. We have similar views. […] we practice, we keep our prayers together, we pray together.* (Džafar, 21, Syria, Czech Republic)

Informants who adopt parental Islam also have a common religious practice, visiting a mosque, praying together, and having dinner together after fasting.

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14 Informants named some persons, such as the globally respected Sheikh of Al-Azhar Ahmed el-Tayeb, Mufti Meng, as well as the Salafist preacher Bill Philips.

15 At the same time, it must be said that the family plays an important role for all informants, including those who choose the path of individualized faith.

> *The mosque at Černý Most is actually, for me, my childhood. I grew up there with the others. Everyone knows me there.* (Hafida, 17, Algeria)

> *We were a good group of young people […] we grew up together, we went to camps, but three or four years ago it fell apart.* (Malika, 17, Sudan)

As the quotations above confirm, despite the fact that most informants went through the same secondary socialization when they attended Islamic and Arabic courses from the ages of six or seven, each informant treated this religious practice, which is tied to local forms of organised religiosity, differently.[16] Those with parental Islam prefer to visit the mosque, while on the contrary, the individualised form of faith can significantly affect the fact that one's religion is not understood as an aspect of identification with the Muslim community. The young Muslims reflected on the fact that their faith is not *a priori* a reason for their social acceptance by other Muslims. They described their experience as follows: When they come to the mosque, they do not feel automatically accepted. It is not a place for them to meet other fellow believers; some informants do not feel the need to have such a community around them in an institution of organised religion. Going to a mosque or prayer house is rather exceptional, both among the second generation and in my sample.

In relation to religious identity, I noted several approaches:

1. Religious identity is a primary part of these young people's identity. They relate to it as something that makes sense in their world, it determines their value system. Issues of religious knowledge and practice may not play a crucial role for them in what it means to live as a Muslim.

2. Their faith takes a form that is individualised, whereby the young Muslims ask themselves why they should be observant, how they should be observant, and what they should observe, how to interpret their religious faith/the Qur´an. They discuss this with their parents and differentiate themselves from their parents' views. They seem to have a more liberal/looser relationship to faith than their parents because they do not keep all the commandments, but they have a real relationship to faith. They build this relationship through their own study and their search for answers to the religious commandments that resonate with the contemporary modern world, with Czech society, and with the social groups in which they find themselves. Their approach aligns with what Roy (2014) describes as deter-

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16 The teaching of Islam and Arabic did not take place only in Prague; this activity is also run by the Muslim communities of Brno and Teplice.

ritorialization and deculturalisation. An individualised form of faith is also held by those informants whose religious identity appears as a mix of other social identities; there is no hierarchical preference among their identities.

3. Children taking up the faith of their parents see Islam as a family inheritance, the closeness of their faith and family identities means that they converge. They do not problematise the faith form of their parents, nor do they protest against it, but rather, they take it for granted. Their religious practice corresponds to how the first generation of migrant Muslims in the Czech Republic practiced. Being Muslim for them also corresponds to being Palestinian, Egyptian or Syrian. They use forms of organised religiosity and visit a mosque or a prayer room together with their parents.

Ethnicity as a compass for otherness

In the imaginary mix of social identities, the religious identity may not dominate. Some informants reflected on the fact that religious identity is not accepted in Czech society and is perceived as problematic. Their statements showed that the solution for them is to relate to an ethnic identity, which often does not play such an important role for them personally but either suppresses or strengthens their acceptance/non-acceptance by the Czech majority. [17]

> *My name suggests where I'm from; I'm teaching English now, I'm a lecturer, so I'll introduce myself as Laila, I'll say I'm Arab, and the students have never asked me if I'm a Muslim. I am proud to be from Syria; even if I do not mention it, my name will reveal it.*
> (Laila, 21, Syria)

As the quotation above confirms, one's relation to one's ethnic identity (in this case to an Arabic one) makes it possible not to talk about one's religious identity. The informants understand Czech society as a society that is against Islam, and therefore they negotiate their social acceptance through their ethnicity; this is a surrogate identity that is, in their opinion, not controversial in the given context.

Nagata (1974) or Barth (1969) speak of ethnic identity being selected situationally, which refers to the contexts in which it is negotiated. They think of it in connection with the fact that actors choose ethnic identities from which they benefit specifically. In this way, the actor either demonstrates

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[17] Surprisingly, this strategy was also presented by those who had an ethnic Czech parent.

a social distance from the majority society (partly dissociates from a given ethnicity) or shows a social solidarity with the majority society (offers values that will be valued in return).

> *People don't know it, so I say I'm from Russia, but that annoys me, because Russia still has Dagestan under its thumb, and smaller states are being degraded because of that.* (Aslan, 21, Dagestan)

The informants try to present themselves comprehensibly to the Czechs. Although it is hurtful to them to do so, they locate themselves within larger geopolitical units because they anticipate that Czech society works more with such larger categories. With this strategy, i.e., social distance (according to Barth and Nagata), the informants also avoid constantly explaining their social identities. Furthermore, this is a strategy of how to feel adequate, how to legitimise one's identity by belonging to a larger geopolitical entity as a political entity, or to a broader ethnic group (as in the example of Laila belonging to the Arabs above).

Although some informants, therefore, have applied the strategy of social distance, I also registered the opposite attitude in my research, that of solidarity towards the majority society. The young Muslims reflected on majority society appreciation of the knowledge they contribute as members of a minority.

> *In a civics lesson, when we were learning about Islam, my teacher said I knew more than she did, so I prepared a lesson and said something about Syria, too.* (Džafar, 20, Syria, Czech Republic)

Ethnicity as a platform for social acceptance, as a mode of social solidarity, is also reflected in the way the informants situate themselves in their parents' countries of origin. They select certain cultural phenomena and articulate them as "good", thus declaring how they could potentially enrich Czech society.

> *In Algeria, the woman is simply in charge of the household, and she creates the atmosphere of that family, and when it's a weekend and my sister comes over, we* [women] *cook together and the guys talk, they watch football, and then we all sit down at the table together and that's it, the atmosphere. […] it seems to me that here in the Czech Republic this is only at Christmas – the family, the atmosphere – while we have it every day.* (Hafida, 17, Algeria)

Many informants pointed out a set of their everyday practices that contrasts with the Czechs and their culture. At the same time, they refer to the feeling of belonging to their ethnic origin and thus construct the boundaries between themselves and the Czechs. The family is crucial in this situation, and they refer to it as one of the highest values in Islam. At the same time, in the context of Czech/European society, the family is also highly valued, enabling intersection at this value and the declaration of a value consensus. Related to this is the interpretation of gender roles, which young Muslims relate to history as an aspect that cannot be ignored or changed.

> *Everyone[18] in Chechnya does sports, martial arts, it's a given after centuries of wars … and that's the contrast with the Czechs. A man should somehow command respect. Czech boys don't have masculinity in them.* (Ahmed, 20, Chechnya)

"An otherness you cannot hide"

My informants perceive that otherness is attributed to them. They themselves reflect on the fact that their otherness is identified, due to their name and appearance, with their place (or parents' place) of origin and with their religion. Like Laila, the other informants use their ethnicity so they will not be recognized through their faith. Other informants try to deal with cultural elements that refer to religion in Czech society so as to avoid stigma.

> *They knew, thanks to my name, that I was a Muslim; my classmates were cruel and my teachers were also. I changed elementary school six times, and it was just last year that I changed my name when I started a new class in eighth grade. They gradually discovered who I was, I had an exotic origin for them, and that was nice.* (Aslan, 21, Dagestan)

> *I wasn't accepted much at elementary school because of the way I look; my name was different. Now they make fun of me more. They are interested in Islam, though; they ask me how I practice.* (Aziz, 19, Turkey/Iraq/Palestine, Jordan/Kuwait)

These young Muslims felt excluded from the school social group. They reported that they had been identified as belonging to another social cat-

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18 It is ment every male.

egory based on visible signs, they were labelled by their classmates. Jenkins (2008) states that selected/individual elements of behaviour become alienated by others as ethnic categorisation criteria without those who commit the behaviour participating in this identification in any way.

Erwing Goffman (2003), in his definition of otherness, from which follows stigma, describes a certain attribute that the person has which is evaluated by others as different, undesirable. The stigma involves two levels: the already-discredited person,[19] who is forced to control this tension, and the potentially-discreditable person, who is forced to control information about himself (Goffman 2003: 10, 120). What is being stigmatized is not the names or appearances themselves, but the religion to which these attributes refer. The informants cannot deny they are the descendants of migrants. Their visuality, their way of dressing, and sometimes the way they use the Czech language are atypical; they can use these factors to their advantage, or understand them in a discriminatory way.

As part of this strategy for gradually "transforming" their identity into a more acceptable form and thus moving from an out-group into an in-group, some informants have changed their names or started dressing differently to stop being perceived as Muslims. They just want to be considered someone who has an exotic origin, and their social identity has thus ceased to be problematic for their classmates. Therefore, young Muslims do not want to be identified with an otherness that refers to religion, and they do want to merge with Czech society. Not being different is essential for young people, especially for adolescents.

> *I like short skirts, I like my hair, and I want to show it. […] Dad wouldn't even allow me to wear a headscarf, because I would no longer be accepted in this society at all because it would be too obvious that I am different.* (Latifa, 18, Syria/Palestine, Czechia/U.A.E.)

I identified how young, second-generation Muslims work with situational ethnicity in different contexts of life in the Czech Republic as follows:

1. The performance of religious identity in the Czech environment is traumatic for second-generation Muslims; therefore, they talk about their ethnic identity instead so they do not have to talk about their religious identity.

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19 For example, if their classmates know somebody is a Muslim, then that person becomes stigmatized and therefore discredited. However, if the actor keeps this information secret and waits, for example, for the right moment before confronting his or her classmates with it, then he/she just remains potentially discreditable and, according to Goffman, controls the information he/she communicates to the classmates.

2. Ethnicity associated with the story of migration, wherein it is common to talk about origin, and as a set of practices related to their (parents') origin country allows the informants to present themselves in categories recognizable by Czech society. My informants refer to their ethnicity as "specificity". They refer to the culture, space and landscape associated with their original nation-state(s). At the same time, the motive of pride is present in the interviews; they state these differences in contrast to Czech culture, the ones that are desirable, which they know means Czech society will appreciate them. At the same time, they disassociate themselves from whatever is incomprehensible or undesirable for Czech society. They use two strategies for negotiating their acceptance in society – social solidarity and social distance. It could be said that their ethnic identity related to a migration origin is a way for young, second-generation Muslims to legitimize their presence in a Czech, secular society with Islamophobic traits.

Conclusion

In my study, I asked how the second generation of Muslims in the Czech Republic negotiates, or rather, treats their religious and ethnic identities. The informants' statements revealed that within their individualised faith (cf. Roy 2004), every young Muslim must reconstruct for herself or himself what it means to be a Muslim in today's modern world, which is to say, they subject their faith to their own critical thinking and define themselves vis-a-vis the cultural Islam of their parents. What matters is one's own relationship with God, not what the local spiritual authority says within organised religiosity. This is also related to their low attendance of prayer houses. Young Muslims who, on the other hand, agree with their parents and adopt their family's form of Islam are also those who use organised religious institutions.

In their study "Construction of the Identities of Young Czech Muslims" (Jiráčková – Kollárová – Kramáreková 2017), the authors come to the conclusion that the second generation merges with Czech society and has a freer relationship to faith than their parents do. At first glance, my informants also seem to have a looser relationship to faith than their parents do. However, their statements show that they take their religious identity seriously; they have just adapted their faith practice to the current conditions of the society in which they live; their religious practice manifests their individualised religious faith. At the same time, they distance their religiosity from their parents' "forced inheritance"; some of them even criticize their parents for practicing what is termed "cultural Islam". The results of my research, therefore, partly diverge from the authors Jiráčková

et al., who state that most respondents prefer a Muslim identity to a Czech one or to their own ethnicity (2017: 152). In my research sample, I came across young Muslims who approach religious identity in a hybrid way and do not perceive it hierarchically, but rather as one of multiple registers related to their identities.

Based on analysing the interviews, I also came to the conclusion that the nature of informants' individualised faith and reflection on their religious practice does not create a religious identity that would automatically imply their acceptance within the community of believers. These young people also do not identify with the category of an *ummah* (religious community) and do not necessarily identify with all Muslims in the Czech Republic or in the world. This finding is also confirmed by Daniel Topinka's thesis (2007; 2016) that most Muslims in the Czech Republic avoid organised religiosity and tend to be what are called "lone wolves". My informants also associate individually and do not use Islamic organizations.

Although religious identity is important to these informants and forms an axis of their individual decisions and actions, the stigma attached to Islam activates their ethnic identity as a way of not declaring their faith, which the informants believe will help ensure their subsequent social acceptance. They treat their ethnic identity through the modes of social solidarity and social distance. Identification with a parent's or parents' country of origin is used when these young people become aware of their attributed otherness being associated with visible features, on the basis of which they are identified as "others" or as Muslims. At this point, they are trying to redefine these characteristics. They want to replace the Muslim stigma with an exotic otherness. They build their attractiveness on the imaginary notion of being a person from another culture that is "shrouded in mystery".

How the informants construct their social identities affects how they navigate the social space. The fact that their religion is not accepted by Czech society leads them to a specific negotiation of their social identities. In this context, young people act as helmsmen between their Muslim experience and that of Czech society, i.e., in-between and through ethnicity, they navigate their ship so as not to "sink". Their ethnicity cannot be seen as something secondary; it allows these actors to be accepted in Czech society.

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