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Siranush Chubaryan
University of South Carolina - Columbia

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THE EXPERIENCE OF MUSLIM MIGRANT STUDENTS IN ARMENIAN,
GERMAN AND FRENCH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Siranush Chubaryan

Bachelor of Arts
Yerevan State University, 1998

Master of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2004

Master of Economics
Yerevan State University, 2006

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Accepted by:

Doyle Stevick, Major Professor

Kara Brown, Committee Member

Peter Moyi, Committee Member

Christian Anderson, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Dedication

To Mama

I wish I could share this day with you. Your inspiration will always guide me.

To Daddy

If not you, this entire dissertation would never be possible. Thank you for who you are.

Abstract

Migrant students from Muslim backgrounds constitute a minority in Armenia, France and Germany. This study, conducted in 2014, explored the influence of higher education on the civic and social integration of migrant students from Muslim backgrounds into French, German and Armenian societies. The present research sought to understand whether and how the social and religious identities of migrant students from Muslim backgrounds changed while trying to integrate into the society of their respective European host countries.

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with nine migrant student-participants from Muslim backgrounds and post-interview reflections on responses written by student participants were the main methods of data collection for this study. The results of the study revealed that migrant students from Muslim backgrounds noticed changes in their social and religious identities. Some of the interviewed students paid attention on their appearance and tended to look like their European peers; others spoke only the language of their host country and tried to make friends mostly with Europeans. Moreover, some students did not follow their religious traditions and rituals because they thought that religious practice could hinder their integration. Despite their willingness to integrate, there were still some students among interviewed participants who were trying to preserve various aspects of cultures and traditions of their home country.

Further, The narratives of student-participants revealed that they faced problems on their path towards integration, which according to them could be solved, if the higher educational policy tackled in more depth the following important aspects: creation of interactive student clubs; incorporation of culture related subjects into the curriculum; having professors from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds; participation of all students in decision making processes; introducing need based scholarships.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

There are many talented and educated people among Muslim immigrants, who are looking for peace in Europe. Believe it or not but Muslims can become skilled workers, engineers and scientists. (Margelov, 2006, p. 38)

In 2008, when I was a program coordinator at the Open Society Foundation of Armenia, the Foundation organized a conference about civic education. The conference examined the challenges facing student engagement within the framework of the Bologna Process.

Experts from different European countries participated, many of them students. Among them were Muslim students whose parents had immigrated to different parts of Europe. Because I was one of the organizers of the conference, I had a chance to speak with many of these students and hear their thoughts about the Bologna Process. The problems that we discussed mostly focused on engaging the younger generation in the civic life of their adoptive countries.

On the third day of the conference, I moderated a round table with five second-generation Muslim immigrants who shared their experiences as European citizens and students in Europe. We mostly talked about the Bologna Process in Europe and the problems that Eastern European countries faced while implementing the Bologna Process. Student engagement was also discussed, along with the idea that within the framework of Bologna and with the opportunities created by the Process, student

engagement could be facilitated because the system allows more flexibility in student decision-making as well as participation. Thus, the Bologna Process was viewed as a student-centered educational policy, which would enable students to promote their educational, cultural as well as social interests along their studies in higher educational institutions of various European states.

Suddenly, one of the Muslim students interrupted the discussion and expressed his concerns regarding various aspects of European higher educational policy (i.e. Bologna Process). His concerns were mainly related to Muslim students' (from migrant background) integration/engagement into the civic life of Europe. The student asserted that the whole adaptation and integration process worsened especially after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The student also mentioned that after those tragic events, European Muslims of migrant backgrounds were viewed (and still are) as potential terrorists. Another important issue voiced by the student was related to the Bologna Policy. Specifically the participant suggested coming up with a list of possible changes in the policy that would facilitate Muslim students' access to education as well as engagement in the civic life of European society.

After the discussion, we had a lunch break, during which I was able to approach our Muslim participants and talk to them about their experiences. The students shared some of the problems they faced as Muslim students from migrant backgrounds, as immigrants in higher education institutions in different European states. Those problems seemed to be of great personal importance, and the students felt the problems needed attention. It was clear that they could not be solved during a five-day conference, and that there was a strong need for more in-depth consideration of these issues.

Outline of the Study on the Experience of Muslim Students in European Universities

The present study includes six main chapters. The first chapter is introductory in nature. I introduce the topic of my dissertation, its significance and the questions that guide my research. In the second chapter of this study, I address the theoretical perspectives supporting my study and discuss literature around the topic of Muslim immigrant students in Europe. The third chapter of my dissertation addresses the research design, including data collection and data analysis, as well as methodological considerations within the framework of the present research. The fourth chapter presents each case or individual narratives based on the collected and analyzed data. In this section, I talk about the themes that have emerged during the data analysis process. The fifth chapter presents the comparative analysis across cases. The sixth and final chapter discusses the results of the study, suggesting some recommendations related to the issues discussed in the research as well as indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the present research and my recommendations for future research.

Problems related to Integration of Muslim Students

My interest in the experiences of Muslim students from migrant backgrounds in European higher educational institutions grew after I heard the stories told by student participants during an international civic education conference held in Armenia in 2008. I decided to focus particularly on higher educational institutions because, according to the research, those institutions could have an important impact on an immigrant student's life. Thus, Gray, Rolph, and Melamid (1996), while observing immigrant students and the impact of higher educational institutions on their lived, noted the following:

The picture that emerges is largely one of inattention coupled with widespread assumptions about immigrant students, assumptions that are unconfirmed by empirical data and analysis. Unchecked, these assumptions could result in unfair practices and reduced educational quality for immigrant students. Because of higher education's critical role in promoting economic assimilation, its leaders should be paying more attention to issues involving these students. (p. 6)

Further, higher educational institutions could have the capability of promoting or hindering the integration of students from Muslim backgrounds. Thus, Bobrin (2013), observing a classroom of diverse students in Cambridge University, noted the unequal treatment of students with Muslim backgrounds. After the researcher conducted his observations, he interviewed these students. The interviews revealed that 70% of Muslim students felt unequal treatment or even a rude attitude from their professors. Students indicated that this type of treatment had a negative influence on their integration into their educational environment as well as into British society in general.

In my professional life, I have traveled extensively and participated in many conferences in different European states, where I frequently heard different intriguing stories about Muslim students. The stories varied, as they were told by different people of several ethnic and religious backgrounds, but most of those stories had one detail in common: Muslim immigrant students were perceived to be disengaged compared to other groups of immigrant students. Even the Bologna Process, with its flexibility, did not entirely solve the problem of the "alienation and detachment" of Muslim students.

The stories that I have heard from students, professors, researchers, showed that students form Muslim backgrounds were often mistreated. The student whose comment

was mentioned at the beginning brought to light several key issues related to immigration: religious identity, social identity, education, and integration. For the immigrant population, the issue of identity is quite complex, because immigrants often try to adapt and fit in to their new environment. In this process, their identities undergo changes. The notion of identity becomes especially contentious when it comes to the Muslim students of migrant backgrounds (especially after tragic events of September 11, 2001). Before September 11, 2001, the presence of Muslim immigrants in Europe's economic, political, cultural, educational spheres was not discussed nearly as much as it is now. While issues of integration have always been challenging for Muslims in Europe, the challenges have become particularly acute after 9/11. Moreover, often the attitudes, structures and existing policies of some European states (e.g. France, Germany, United Kingdom, Armenia, etc.) hindered Muslim immigrant students' educational, civic, and social integration, which created obstacles for those students in building their future careers and lives while legally residing in Europe.

Although there is a vast literature (e.g. Barseghyan, 2010; Shadid, 2002; Kamaroff, 2010; Landa, 2004) around the topic of Muslim immigrants in Europe, the research still lacks depth on the ways in which Muslim students from migrant background perceive the problems they face while attending European higher educational institutions. The main focus of researchers (e.g. Landa, 2004) is the general Muslim population, including their cultures, traditions, and the practice of Islam in West. There is also research (e.g. Shadid; 2002), that focuses on Muslim second-generation immigrants' religious identity in one specific country context (e.g. the Netherlands). The existing literature does not fully explore the causes related to this specific group of immigrant

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students' problems. Finally, it is important to take into account the solutions proposed by Muslim students themselves and consider their suggestions for enriching their academic and civic experiences.

The stories told by Muslim students inspired me to initiate this study in order to have a deeper understanding of the interplay between current educational policy (e.g. the Bologna Process) and the integration of Muslim students from migrant background into educational, civic, and social life of Europe.

The Bologna Process as the context and background of my research.

Beginning in 1999, many European states signed the Bologna Declaration, or as it is commonly known, the Bologna Process. The Bologna Declaration was a result of various meetings and agreements between politicians of 29 European countries (including France and Germany), the goal of which was to make "the standards and quality of higher education qualifications" comparable (Mungiu-Pippidi & Deca, 2012). As a result, under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the European Higher Education Area was created. In order to face globalization and respond to its challenges, governments of European countries realized that it had to change in many different ways (Mungiu-Pippidi & Deca, 2012). According to the Lisbon Agenda, higher education and research were considered to be major means to assist Europe in achieving its goals and development strategies and, thus, to facilitate the emergence of the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world (Meek, Teichler, & Kearney, 2009). By joining the Bologna Process, many countries all over Europe hoped to adequately respond to globalization (Kwiek, 2004). Starting in 2001, other member countries of the Council of Europe were allowed to sign

and join the Process. Currently 47 European states participate in the Bologna Process, including Armenia, Germany and France.

One of the key aspects of Bologna Declaration was student engagement for quality assurance. Merabishvili, Tsereteli, and Espineira Bellon (2017), while observing the implementation of the Bologna process in Georgia, wrote:

> Students' engagement in the quality management process has the key role in the effective education quality assurance. The term "students' engagement" was established in the scientific educational literature in 1990s, which means the interaction of students and other departments of an educational institution to increase the academic results and to develop the educational activities, which aim at increasing the students' experience and higher educational institution's reputation." (p.53)

Merabishvili, Tsereteli, and Espineira Bellon (2017) found that the level of student engagement throughout Georgian universities was low.

Milburn-Shaw and Walker (2017), while observing higher educational institutions in Europe, indicated that the idea of student engagement should be looked at through the lenses of the "idea of university." The authors came up with the following important points in regards with student engagement:

1. A notion of student identity based on a will to learn, with university learning an end in itself, not just a means to externally determined goals.

2. A pedagogical approach that is centered on the fostering of critical thinking and independent thought; universities by their very nature should be questioning, challenging and critical, particularly of dominant perspectives and practices.

3. A democratic approach based on genuine and continuous debate, participation and critical thinking rather than the form without substance of current student representation, which serves to bolster and reproduce the economic utilitarian ethos.

4. A view of HE as involving the development of the personality and whole person, which in so doing goes beyond a narrow focus on classroom activities and academic assessments, and on preparing the student for her place in the economy.

5. A sense of the university as a community, or to be more precise a community of communities, with students joining and becoming integrated in these communities that exist particularly at the subject level, and in the form of student groups and societies, as well as at the broader level of the institution as a whole.

6. An engaged pedagogy that sees learning as a shared project between students and teachers, rather than the transfer of knowledge from the latter to the former.

Because the Bologna Process is the primary higher educational policy framework in the countries in this study, it constitutes the context of the current research. Because one of the key aspects of Bologna Process is related to student engagement, it is important to investigate how the Bologna Process has shaped the engagement and participation of immigrant students from Muslim backgrounds.

Immigration of Muslims to Europe.

This section provides the historic background for my study and its specific contexts for France Germany and Armenia.

 Muslim immigration had historically different origins. For example in France, it was closely linked to colonialism; in Germany it stemmed mostly from labor needs and

German prosperity, while in Armenia it is a recent development. After the break-up of Soviet Union many migrants from Muslim backgrounds migrated to Armenia. The main reason of their migration was education.

Miller (2005) discussed different stages of Muslim immigration to Europe. The researcher divided them into the following categories:

- *The guest-worker era*

- *The stabilization era*

- *The post-cold war era*

- *Europe's Muslims after 9/11, Madrid and 7/7*

The Guest-Worker Era.

Miller (2005) indicated that the "Guest-worker era" dates back to the period after World War II, when Europe was in need of workers from different parts of the world. The researcher asserted that, "Among European states, France constituted an exception in that it could be considered a land of immigration" (p. 3). France welcomed European immigrants (e.g. Italians, Spaniards, etc.). At the same time, France accepted immigrants from Muslim background from African countries as well, but those immigrants were just considered to be temporary workers. The French government was especially harsh towards Algerian Muslims. Miller (2005) states that,

> The Algerian drama greatly complicated matters. French authorities grudgingly conceded mobility rights and eventually citizenship to Algerian Muslims, but too belatedly to preserve French Algeria. Algerian Muslim emigration to metropolitan France surged during the war of independence from 1954 to 1962. Under the Evian Accords that allowed Algerians to vote for independence, French

citizens of Algerian Muslim background could opt to retain their French

citizenship or become citizens of the new Algerian state. A fraction retained

French citizenship including the Harkis, Algerian Muslim French soldiers and

their families, who were resettled in metropolitan France with some governmental

assistance. (p. 3)

Germany and Switzerland were also among European countries accepting

immigrants from other parts of the world. The worker immigrants who came to Germany

and Switzerland were mostly Italians. Starting in the 1960s, Germany and Switzerland

started to recruit Muslim immigrant workers from Turkey and Yugoslavia as well. As

Miller (2005) mentioned,

Most foreign workers recruited during the guest-worker era did repatriate, but a

large fraction, one quarter to one third, did not. The German case was

emblematic. After the brief 1967 recession, guest-worker recruitment resumed.

Turkish guest-workers became the single largest component of Germany's foreign

population of nearly four million when further recruitment was stopped in 1973.

Many Turkish guest-workers renewed their permits and began to bring in spouses

and dependents. (p. 4)

The Stabilization Era.

According to Miller (2005), the "stabilization era" dates to 1975-80s. During this

period, there was a large number of unemployed Muslim workers in Europe. During this

era, the immigration issues were widely debated by European politicians,

Among the many issues fostering concern over immigration policies figured

asylum. In the 1980s, the numbers of asylum-seekers skyrocketed. Many asylum-

seekers came from largely Islamic societies like Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. Not a few Europeans viewed asylum-seekers as economically-motivated migrants. (p. 6)

Miller (2005) indicated, that many policies adopted by the French government during the "stabilization era" were not only anti-immigration, but in often anti-Muslim.

Post Cold War Era.

According to Miller (2005), during the "post cold war" or "integration era,"

The growing scholarly literature on the state of immigrant integration only partially concerned Muslims. Heterogeneity above all characterizes the Islamic population. Its diversity defies generalization. The state of integration of immigrants and their offspring depends a great deal on the context in which they live. European governments pursue distinctive migration policies and possess diverse institutional arrangements which bear upon integration or incorporation. (p. 8)

While discussing the integration of migrants from Muslim backgrounds Miller (2005) referred to comparative research by two Dutch scholars among migrants from Turkey and Morocco, residing in Germany and France. Dutch scholars, according to Miller (2005), found that,

…integration of Turkish and Moroccan-background individuals was strongly influenced by the setting in which they lived. There was greater access to higher education in France than in Germany. But unemployment and underemployment were worse in France than in Germany. (p. 8)

The 9/11 Era and Muslim Students from Migrant Backgrounds.

The Muslim population both in Western and Eastern Europe increases. The data provided by The Pew Forum (2011) shows that European Muslim population has increased since 1990. According to Pew (2011), in 1990 in Europe there were around 29.6 million Muslims, while in 2010 the number grew up to 44.1 million. With the increase of the Muslim population in Europe, the coexistence of Islamic and European cultures requires in depth analysis. Though Europe seemed to open its doors for immigrants by adopting policies about multiculturalism and minority rights, Europe did not welcome Muslim immigrants, even the second and third-generation. According to Boldea, Silasi, and Dragoi (2008),

> Since the late 1990s, official policies concerning multiculturalism in Europe have been met with increasing opposition. Multiculturalism itself has become the focal point of a political and ideological debate. Critics state that as a model it has failed, that immigrant minorities remain 'outsiders', and that they are not participating in the civic and social life of the host country. (p. 94)

Similarly, Gibson and Koyama (2011) indicated that,

> Scholars studying immigrants and education in Europe have suggested that the second and third generations (i.e., the children and grandchildren of immigrants) are in many instances more like involuntary minorities because they have not chosen to immigrate, are unwanted in Europe, and face enormous barriers to equal opportunity both in school and in the job market. (p. 393)

Ogbu and Simons (1998) noted that involuntary minorities thought that they had less chances of success compared to dominant population (e.g. locals) of a given country

due to their minority status. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998) involuntary minorities felt discriminated even if they worked hard or did well in educational institutions and they were more critical of the school curriculum and mistrustful of teachers and the school.

The educational policies were not flexible enough to provide Muslim students with equal opportunities in line with the local (e.g. non-Muslim) European students (Barseghyan, 2010). Though there were prejudices against Muslims before September 11, most of the research, including Geisser (2004) suggested that those tragic events exacerbated the existing phobia towards Islam. In many countries, Islam and Muslims have become associated with terrorism. Many Europeans, as well as citizens of other states, with the help of mass media, created a completely new image of Islam (Shadid, 2002). That new image described Muslims as being different from, and having nothing to do with the rest of the world. Even their ethnic background (e.g. Turkish, Arab, Persian, Kurdish, etc.) did not seem to matter much. Europeans felt that Muslim values were distinct from European (or any Western) ones. As Kamaroff (2010) argues, "According to Europeans, Muslims have only religion, and religion defines all their sentiments, their actions" (p. 12). Kamaroff noted that Western society saw Islam as a religion of violence, thus considering Muslims to be violent people. During the first months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many people were afraid to fly in the same plane as Muslims. According to Kamaroff (2010), in many schools and higher educational institutions all over Europe, Muslim students and children faced exclusion because they were considered to be possible, if not probable, terrorists. Many Christian or secular Europeans perceived Muslims to be non-European in race, ethnicity, religion and culture,

imposing mutually exclusive identity categories on foreign born immigrants and even native born Muslim citizens from migrant background.

Why Study the Integration Experiences of Muslim Students

At the beginning, I mentioned the comments of a Muslim immigrant student who participated in an international civic education conference that was organized by the Open Society Foundation of Armenia. The student's complaints were not limited to a couple of people; on the contrary, the complaints resonated with many Muslims who resided in Europe and who wanted to become part of European society. This student was just one among many. Greenfield (2013) noted that,

> 74% of the people polled by Ipsos think that Islam is an "intolerant" religion, incompatible with the values of French society. An even more radical figure, 8 out of 10 French people think that the Muslim religion seeks to impose its way of life on others. (p. 1)

This research showed that many Christian French had a hard time accepting Muslims as part of their society. These types of intolerance became more obvious in educational institutions, where Muslim students often faced mistreatment and disrespectful attitudes from their professors. Zakalwe (2012) mentioned an incident in which a Muslim student criticized one of his professors for disrespecting Islam, "During his lessons Monsieur Imbert allowed himself to insult Muslims. He engages in anti-Islam Propaganda. It's unacceptable" (p. 2).

The presence of Muslims in Europe seemed to be outside of the native European paradigm (Winter, Smith, Angenendt, & Barret, 2007). Muslims were perceived by many Europeans to be representatives of a violent religion. But was religion the only reason?

Did it mean that the policies related to multiculturalism, minority rights, human and religious rights, and educational rights adopted by many European states would lose their power with regards to Muslims?

Gibson and Koyama (2011), citing Keaton's ethnography on young Algerian women in France, indicated that,

> The French national education system serves both to assimilate and exclude Muslim teenagers of north and west African backgrounds. While the young women who were the focus of this study identified themselves as French, or French of specific African origin (e.g.,Algerian), they were seen as "delinquent" youth from the "other France" by those who considered themselves to be the "real French." Keaton's work highlights how national identities, predicated on categories of perception, fall apart in multicultural and multiethnic societies in which belonging is narrowly conceived. (p. 400)

Within the frameworks of these studies, I examined the experiences of Muslim immigrant students who were enrolled in higher educational institutions in Europe. Based on the narratives of student-participants of the present study, I explored and understood what roles educational policies played in integrating Muslim immigrant students into the social and civic life of Europe. I employed a narrative approach to these case studies, which allowed me to have a more profound understanding of Muslim students' perceptions of their social identity, religious identity, and civic integration/engagement at European universities in France, Germany, and Armenia. Creswell (2006) indicated that,

Narrative researchers situate individual stories within participants' personal experiences (their jobs, their homes), their culture (racial or ethnic), and their historical contexts (time and place). (p. 56)

Muslim immigrant students' social and religious identities in Europe were important because immigrants often changed the way they initially perceived themselves in their home countries in order to better assimilate to new environment, supposing that changing their identities would help them to integrate into their new society with greater ease (Jaloyan, 2008). In order to better understand religious and social identity strategies, it was important to have in-depth knowledge about factors like "majority and minority status in host and home countries" (Yang, Ebaugh, 2001). Because Muslim immigrant students were considered a minority in Europe, it was important to understand what happened to their social and religious identity, and whether those identities changed while they resided in Europe. Education could play an important role in identity formation and social integration. I focused on the influence of education on Muslim students' social as well as religious identity and on their social/civic integration.

I conducted the present study with hopes that it would be a useful contribution to existing literature on European higher education in general, and European Muslim immigrant students studying in European higher educational institutions in particular. This study could also be a valuable contribution to literature in international and comparative education, especially higher education. The existing theories and research works on social and religious identity and social (civic) integration/engagement would deepen understanding of the present topic.

Guiding Questions

Gibson and Koyama (2011) observed that,

Who immigrant youth become or are becoming, as well as what they do or do not

accomplish or are in the process of accomplishing, is often predicated on the

relationships they build and come to draw upon across various school settings.

Importantly, as illustrated in these representative studies on identity formation, the

dynamic and active processes of identity construction by immigrant-origin youth

encompass both the ways in which individuals "define" themselves in relation to

others and the ways they are "constituted as a subject by dominant discourses and

representations" including those of schools. (p. 398)

Thus, in order to understand how Muslim students from immigrant backgrounds

integrated into European higher educational environment and consequently into European

society, how education influenced their integration process and whether or not their

identities underwent any changes, I tried to answer the following questions:

1. As residents of a European country (Germany, France, and Armenia), how do
   Muslim immigrant students perceive and describe their experiences with social
   and religious identity, and how far do they realize changes in their identity?

2. As students in a European institution of higher education, how do Muslim
   immigrants describe their experiences with European education and integration
   into the European institutional environment and, consequently, into European
   society?

3. How do Muslim immigrant students perceive the higher-education environments
   of France, Germany and Armenia?

Why is the Study on Muslim students in European Universities Important?

It is important to study Muslim students from immigrant backgrounds because of the aspects discussed below.

Literature.

As previously mentioned, there is a vast amount of literature (e.g., Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007; Evergeti, 2011, etc.) that discusses the Muslim immigrant population in Europe. Some researchers emphasized the influence of religion on relationships among Muslims and native Europeans (Evergeti, 2011), while others looked at immigrant identity formation basing their arguments both on race and religion (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007). The literature also talked about aspects related to relationships between acculturation and identity (Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones, 2006). However, the research mostly discussed the Muslim population in general, whereas the Muslim student population from migrant backgrounds, as a part of the European higher educational environment, was not taken as a separate topic for discussion. The major flow of Muslim immigrants came to Europe in 1960s and 1970s because of economic hardships in their native countries. The main goal of those immigrants was to find jobs in Europe in order to be able to survive. In contrast with those immigrants, their descendants were seeking better opportunities. Hermann (2004) indicated that the descendants of Muslim immigrants aspired to become more Europeanized. The debates related to the presence of Muslims in Europe were ignited especially after the terrorist attacks not only in the United States but also in Europe. According to El Hamel (2002), the debates were especially focused on younger generation of European Muslims. Many Europeans considered them harmful for other younger generation residing in Europe. Kalinin (2010)

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mentioned that some secular Christian Europeans thought that the younger European

Muslim immigrants were affiliated with terrorist organizations because most of the

terrorists were young; others thought that young Muslims wanted to convert young

Christians to Islam, etc. Those were common views among Europeans.

In the present study, I focused my attention on the stories of French, German and

Armenian Muslim students from migrant backgrounds. This approach enabled me to

understand how those students perceived their social and religious identity in a European

environment, what their experiences were, and what their reflections thereof. Thus, I

think that the present study could be a useful contribution to existing higher educational

literature.

Educational policy and civic integration.

How does education influence civic integration? Researchers have conducted

important studies with Muslim immigrant students in single country contexts (e.g.,

Schmidt, 2012; Rissanen, 2012). I should point out, though, that my study directed its

attention on the interplay between educational policy and integration of Muslim

immigrant students into German, French and Armenian society.

Selected countries.

This study aimed to look at challenges related to educational policies in France,

Germany, and Armenia, to see whether those policies promoted or hindered the access of

Muslim immigrant students to education. Gibson and Koyama (2011) asserted that,

Comparative cross-national studies of the educational experiences of the children

of immigrants and their social and educational outcomes is an area of research

which is poorly developed both because of the complexities of conducting such

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studies and because of the paucity of scholars prepared to do this sort of work. (p. 401)

The cross-national study allowed me to have more in depth understanding of the experiences of Muslim students from migrant background in three distinct European countries.

I selected sites in Germany and France as case studies for this dissertation because these two countries were among the Christian European states with the largest Muslim populations. According to the Pew Forum data (2017a), the Muslim population in Germany comprises 6.1% of the total population, while in France it comprises 8.8% of total population. Pew Forum data (2011) showed that Armenia's Muslim population comprises 1.8% of total population and is trending to increase through 2020, as the number of immigrants from Iran increases. Another noteworthy study conducted by Pew Research Center (2017b) found that only 7% of Armenians would be willing to accept Muslims as members of the Armenian family.

Another reason related to the choice of these three countries was that some studies of the education of Muslims in Germany, as well as France noted changes in educational policy, including the incorporation of Islam into the curriculum in order to promote Muslim immigrant students' integration into European society (Driessen & Merry, 2006; Hahneberg, 2003; Abdai, 2010; Schirrmacher, 2007; Blignaut, 2003). No similar research has been conducted in Armenia as of yet, though some international organizations (e.g. World Bank, Open Society Foundation of Armenia, OSCE/ODHIR Armenia, etc.) did conduct research into complications related to the Bologna Process in general in Armenia.

The Countries Selected as Cases: Germany, France and Armenia

The existing policies on religious and minority rights in France, Germany and Armenia seem to be quite strict, even relating to traditional Muslim female populations' use of headscarves in educational institutions. For instance, David Sapsted (2010) indicated that Germans' attitudes towards Muslims was noticeably more intolerant compared to people from other Western European countries. Another example is the French government's law that prohibits the presence of any kind of religious signs in schools and universities. According to Bouzar and Kada (2003), Muslims in France did not enjoy their religion as much as other residents of the country enjoyed theirs. Historically, Christian Armenia has always struggled in its relations with its Muslim neighbors (e.g. the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire, the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, etc.). In recent years there has been a rise of the Muslim population in Armenia due to the increasing rates of migration from neighboring Iran. Jaloyan (2008) mentioned that the attitude of Armenians towards Muslim immigrants varied, but according to the researcher it was mostly negative.

After Armenia gained its independence from Soviet Union back in 1991, the country signed the European Neighborhood Policy with the aim to become a member of the EU community. Becoming one of the EU states would mean changing from within and aspiring to democratic values in tune with other European states. It was not an easy thing to do after being one of the Soviet republics for so many years. Notions like civic engagement, respect for human rights including minority rights, etc., were somewhat new for the country and in some sense a struggle to adapt to this new value system. With this new value system overtaking the old Soviet value system it was hard to predict how

Armenians would react to those changes and whether or not they would be able or willing to accept a more multinational Armenia. In this regard the research work conducted by Michaels and Stevick (2009) was consonant with Armenia's situation. The researchers looked at situation in Estonia and Slovakia after the fall of iron curtain. The main similarity among these two states and Armenia was that all those states were on their way of becoming one of Eastern European states by adapting the new value system, which was often unacceptable for the societies residing in those states. In this regard, Michaels and Stevick (2009) noted the following:

> …the meaning of Europe is contested through counternarratives about what constitutes Europeanness, and the concept of Europe is sometimes appropriated not to advance civic citizenship, but rather for exclusionary and nationalist ends, (p. 225).

Armenia was therefore an interesting case, and no similar study has been conducted in Armenian higher educational institutions. Its particular history and problems related to integration of Muslim immigrant students, made the predominantly Christian and somewhat new Eastern European country an interesting context in which to examine the experience of Muslim minority students.

While discussing the choice of these three countries, it is important to mention that all three countries were part of the same higher educational policy (i.e. The Bologna Process). Thus, according to François Orivel (2005), "The origin of the Bologna process in France can be traced in a report prepared at the request of the Ministry of Education in 1998. This report was aimed at proposing a harmonization of the structure of diplomas in the European space" (p. 2). After the signing of the Bologna Declaration and introducing

the process into the French educational system, higher education in France was no longer exclusively state funded. The tuition fee was not very high (ranging from 150-700 Euros yearly for public institutions, 700-15000 Euros for private institutions), but it still could be a problem for the immigrant population in general, making their access to higher education more difficult.

Germany was also among the 29 European countries to sign the Bologna Declaration in 1999. As Mause (2013) explained,

What is interesting is that the Bologna Declaration was not a legally binding contract amongst the states who signed it. There also existed no sanctions for the non-implementation of the Bologna objectives. The same holds for the subsequent declarations published within the ongoing Bologna Process. (p. 19).

Thus, in Germany the change in the higher education system had more of a gradual character. Due to governmental pressures starting from the winter term of 2010, German higher educational institutions introduced Bachelor's and Master's degrees into higher educational institutions all over Germany, making the system more in tune with the Bologna Process (Mause, 2013). Higher education in Germany, though, is still state funded, which means that high tuition cost is not a potential hindrance to Muslim immigrant students' education process.

The introduction of tuition fees could be one of the potential challenges within the framework of the Bologna Process that could hinder the equal access of Muslim immigrant students to education in Armenia and France. For instance, in Armenia, the scholarship system for students is not well-established, which makes it hard for students to apply for grants and financial assistance. In France education is not state funded, but it

is more or less affordable. Since education in Germany is state funded and Muslim immigrant students still face problems while studying in higher education institutions in Germany, tuition fees appeared not to be one of the main challenges within the Bologna Process in the country. It is important to mention, though, that there are many foundations (e.g. A.Q.M Salehuddin and Najmun Nisa Memorial Trust, Aamir Mustafa Kidwai Trust, etc.), which financially assist Muslim students all over the world, making their access to education easier but not on a large scale.

Limitations of the Study

My research is a set of case studies that I then compared. The main method of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with nine Muslim immigrant students from France, Germany and Armenia. The study is not therefore statistically representative and cannot be generalized. Because the study involved three countries, I could not be present in each of the selected countries for long periods of time, limiting my contact with the student-participants.

I conducted the interviews with student-participants for this study in 2014. In the years that followed the situation has changed. The events that have influenced the overall situation regarding Muslim immigrants and attitudes towards them include but are not limited to the following: the Syrian refugee crisis; tragic terrorist attacks in France, Germany and other European countries; and Armenia's four day war with neighboring Azerbaijan. In addition, there has been noticeable anti-Muslim propaganda in many European countries as well as the United States, with the rise of far right nationalist forces into power, which had its negative effects on Muslim population in general and Muslim immigrants in particular. Nevertheless, I hope that the study drew an in-depth

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picture of the experiences of Muslim immigrant students residing in France, Germany and Armenia.

Terminology

In order to fully understand this research, it is necessary to define the following terms:

Europe: The main definition of Europe is a continent of the Eastern Hemisphere. In this particular study I refer to three European countries (e.g. France, Germany and Armenia), which are historically Christian. In this research, only three European countries are included: France, Germany and Armenia. Armenia has been a member country of the European Neighborhood Policy since 2004. The Bologna Process, the European higher educational policy, has inspired many countries in Europe, including Armenia, in order unify European higher educational system under one umbrella to be able to face challenges of globalization.

The European Paradigm of Islam: The treatment of Muslim immigrant population in Europe (Allievi, 2003; Malik, 2002; Tutt, 2012).

Identity: Individual characteristics of a person (Tajfel & Turner, 1986); individuality; sense of being an individual; personality

Immigration of Muslims to Europe: Immigrants from rural, traditional areas of the Middle East and Islamic African countries as well as other parts of the world, comprise the bulk of non-European immigrants to Europe (Ben-David, 2009; Kern, 2011).

Integration: A dynamic long-term and continuous two-way process of mutual accommodation without a static outcome; process of adaptation by immigrants, both men and women, involving the receiving society (Council of the European Union, 2004).

Minority: "Under international law, there is no agreed definition of this term. Some countries define a minority as that which is recognized as such by national laws. In this report, the term refers to ethnic and religious groups who are not the dominant group in society" (Report on Muslims in Europe; OSI, 2010).

Muslim: Followers of Islamic faith. In this research the term is defined as a diverse group of people (i.e. students), who identify themselves as Muslims, as well as "view themselves in a cultural rather than a religious context" (Report on Muslims in Europe; OSI, 2010).

Muslim immigrant students: Students from a Muslim background who migrated to Europe or whose parents migrated to Europe and are currently enrolled in European higher educational institutions (Duran, 2012; Friedman & Saroglou, 2010; Gibson, 1997; El Hamel, 2002; Metcalf, 1996; Miller, 2005; Peach & Glebe, 1995).

Religious identity: A particular type of identity that is understood as a membership to a relevant religious group (Ajrouch, 2007; Erlanger, 2012; Foner & Alba, 2008; Modood & Werbner, 1997; Salvatore, 2004).

Social identity: Part of an individual's self- concept, which is understood as membership in a relevant social group (Brown & Zagefka, 2006; Haslam, Ellemers, Reicher, Reynolds, Schmitt 2010; Turner & Reynolds; 2010).

Social integration: "The provision and promotion of equal rights and access in the field of education, employment and decision-making. Overcoming discrimination is

implicit throughout policies and practices to realize inclusion," (Report on Muslims in

Europe; OSI, 2010).

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Before starting the discussion of the scientific research that has informed this study, it is important to note that this study was conducted back in 2013-2014. Thus, when I, as a researcher, first explored the topic of Muslim immigrant students in European institutions of higher education, the general literature with regards of Muslim immigrants in Europe was not as rich and profound as it is now. Some relevant studies that appeared after conducting the present research are incorporated in the concluding chapter of the present study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) wrote that, "A conceptual framework explains…the main things to be studied - the key factors, constructs or variables - and the presumed relationships among them" (p. 18). Maxwell's (2004) design best fits the goals of the present research. Maxwell (2004) divided the conceptual framework into the following major categories:

- *Experiential knowledge*
- *Prior theory and research*
- *The uses of existing theory*
- *Concept maps*
- *Other uses of existing research*
- *Pilot and exploratory studies*
- *Thought experiments*

I constructed the conceptual framework for the present research from three important components: 1) Knowledge based on my personal experience, or as Maxwell (2004) suggested "Experiential Knowledge"; 2) Theories that guided my approach towards my topic, or according to Maxwell (2004), "existing theories"; 3) Research related to my topic of study, or as Maxwell (2004) called it "existing research." I chose this conceptual framework design for my study because it helped me answer my research questions, because it assisted me in designing my research, and because it served as a firm ground for me in presenting the interrelatedness among the problems that I studied in this research. Following is the discussion of each component of my conceptual framework.

Knowledge Based on my Experience

I grew up in a family where the human race has never been labeled based on skin color, religious identity, nationality, or culture. My parents would always teach me to respect people for what they were without taking into account where they came from, what faith they had, or what social status they held. So, as a child, I would never think that people might face many problems because of their religious belonging or their social status, language they spoke or country from which they originated. Why was I so naïve as a child? Maybe it is because I grew up in the Soviet Union, where many nationalities lived together in peace for many years. I am not trying to imply that the Soviet Union is the ideal country, but I want to assert that in my adolescence I would never think that issues like identity or religion could become a major issue for people.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the doors opened for us to travel and get to know what was happening in other parts of the world. It took me by surprise that

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people from other parts of the world were asking me questions about my nationality and religion. I cannot explain the feeling I had towards these questions, but it was not a positive one. Though I thought I found a good answer to those questions by replying that, "I am just a human, like everyone else," the people around me did not seem to understand my response, and kept asking questions.

One of those instances occurred in Spain, when I was a student there learning Spanish at the University of Granada (La Universidad de Granada). When I first entered the university, I had to meet with the representative of student affairs for my placement into an appropriate class. I filled out all necessary forms, and I answered questions related to my nationality, age, educational background, etc., and went for an interview with the representative from the Student Affairs Office. I thought that we were only going to discuss the level of my knowledge of Spanish for my class placement. Then I noticed that the woman was going through my application form. She looked up at me and asked whether or not I was Muslim. I answered that I was not religious, after which I had to respond to a question about my parents' religion. Later, I had to explain that Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as a national religion, and that if I were to choose a religion, it would be Christianity. The flow of questions stopped and I was placed in a class together with a mixed group of Europeans.

A few days later I noticed that there were certain classrooms where students of darker color and certain religious apparel (i.e. women covered with headscarves) were placed—classrooms where there were no Europeans. I do not really know why, but it caught my interest and I decided to approach one of the women in that classroom and start a conversation with her. I did so during one of the lunch breaks. The student that I

approached was from a Moroccan background, whose parents migrated to Spain when she was only 3 years old. We talked about her family, her interests, and her schooling. She spoke three languages: Arabic, Spanish, and French. She was very well read and a highly educated person. She liked to talk about art and literature, and she was very interested in linguistics. Finally, I asked her why she and the other students were placed in a different classroom. At first she did not want to answer my question, but after three or four days of talking she explained to me the reasons for having different classrooms. She said that Muslims, no matter how long they lived in Spain, were not considered native speakers of Spanish, which was one of the reasons for them to be separated from the mainstream. Another reason, according to her, was that not many professors wanted to work with Muslim students, as they required a high level of proficiency in Spanish. Those were the two main reasons directly related to the university policy, which she told me. Another important detail that caught my attention was her surprise when I told her that Armenia was in Eastern Europe. She explained that all along her years in Spain she never interacted with Europeans the way we were interacting. She also pointed out that she actually did not have any European friends.

After talking to this woman, I thought about the questions the student affairs representative asked me, I thought about my placement, and finally I thought about the fact that my knowledge of Spanish was actually much less advanced than that of this Moroccan student. Her Spanish was fluent and seemed to be native, while I had little practice and made mistakes when speaking. Despite my poor knowledge of Spanish, I was placed in a mainstream classroom with a mixed group of Europeans (e.g. Spanish, French, Italian, English, etc.). She, despite her excellent knowledge of the language, was

in a classroom designated for Muslims. It did not seem to be a major problem to me then. Fifteen years ago, it did not occur to me that separating Muslims from Europeans in a higher educational institution was an issue related to social or religious identity.

Many years later, at the conference organized by the Soros Foundation, the Muslim student's speech made me recall the incident at the University of Granada. It inspired me to look at the social and religious identity issues of Muslim immigrant students as a potential problem that exists in many European countries. I suddenly realized that my placement at the University of Granada was related to the fact that I was a European from a Christian country and by no means related to my knowledge of the Spanish language.

Through my PhD coursework at the University of South Carolina, I learned many theories related to race and identity formation, especially within the framework of education. I think this study provided me with a unique space to apply both my academic background and personal experiences. There is literature that treats Muslim identities in European reality from many different angles. Before thinking over my research questions, I have gone through many studies, which were somewhat related to this specific topic. Despite the vast amount of literature, it still lacked information on the experiences of Muslim immigrant students in higher educational institutions. Also, the literature did not provide details related to Muslim immigrant youth experiences within the framework of higher educational institutions. While the existing studies did consider important questions like the integration of Muslim immigrants into European society, they still lacked information on how education influenced that whole integration process,

and how European higher education affected the social and religious identities of those students.

I realized that to understand my approach towards the present research and to its questions, I needed to provide an explanation of some key factors (i.e., theory) that could drive this study. Based on my general knowledge as well as on the literature on identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Bhabha, 1994; Bamyeh, 2010; Schmidt, 2012; etc.), I assumed that the main ideas within the core of this research were the following: 1) Identity is a social concept of self-perception and it can be influenced (positively or negatively) by different social institutions; 2) Identity can be found on various societal levels and fluid; 3) Education can play an important role in the entire identity formation process and can make individual identities be engaged in or disengaged from the society.

Finally, the concept of identity has become global and with the help of local peculiarities, we can define the concept of global identity in the case of Muslim immigrant students. Thus, within the framework of this study my goal was to understand how Muslim immigrant students perceived their own religious and social identities in a European reality (which is local for them now), how they saw European societies approaching their identities, how they thought, education influenced their social and religious identities, and whether or not education facilitated their integration process into European society.

Theories on Social, Religious Identities and Education's Influence on Identity

According to Schmitt, Spears, and Branscombe (2002), identity is a social construct. In order to understand the meaning of identity within the framework of this specific research, I tried to analyze it and look at it from the perspectives of sociology.

Sociological perspectives on identity informed my research, while I was looking at

Muslim immigrant youth and their experiences in European society. This study also

concerned the integration of Muslim immigrant students into civic life of Europe. I was

investigating the challenges related to educational policies in France, Germany, and

Armenia, which could hinder the equal access of Muslim immigrant students to education

in Europe (thus making the integration of those students into European society more

complicated). I treated education here as a social institution, which could potentially

influence (positively or negatively) the civic engagement process of Muslim immigrant

students. Thus, in the discussion that follows I analyze the notions of social identity,

religious identity, and education as a social institution influencing identity.

   Social Identity.

   Tajfel and Turner (1986) asserted that there were two main types of identities:

personal and social. Personal identity was linked to the individual characteristics of the

person, as well as the roles they played in interpersonal relations, while social identity,

according to Tajfel and Turner (1986) was associated with a person's membership in a

social group (e.g. student, immigrant, male, female, etc.). As Turner and Reynolds (2010)

indicated, the existence of two types of identity could be considered as "a reflection of

the duality of human nature," or the desire to emphasize the uniqueness and the desire to

be protected by others. Thus, as Turner and Reynolds (2011) observed, social identity is

part of the "ego" of a human, which included the knowledge of his/her membership in a

social group together with the value and emotional significance of that specific

membership**.**

In some sense, both identities were seen as social and the sociality of both was manifested by the fact that those identities arose in the course of human communication with others, while the importance and the content of those identities were determined by the context of those communications. Particularly, communicative situations could determine human perception of the self as an individual and as a member of society. Social scientists Jugé and Perez (2006) in their discussion of Muslim immigrants in France asserted that social identity comprised "the notion of national, racial, ethnic, regional, and local identities" (p. 200). Jugé and Perez (2006) mentioned that even though French politics did not directly discuss or address issues related to racism, multicultural society, immigrants, etc., it still had deep roots in its "racialized colonial past." In this regard, they indicated:

> The concept of 'otherness' is situated in the center of French political discourse, and is manifested in constructions of whiteness. 'Otherness' has created a double standard for legal non-European immigrants compared with French and European citizens. The politics of integration and assimilation are founded on the ideological backdrop of universality, which falsely represents French society in color-blind terms. This is evident in both moderate and extremist political party rhetoric in regards to new policies of immigration, citizenship and nationality. (p. 187)

Homi Bhabha (1994) discussed the concept of "otherness", outlining that the minority culture in the West was tagged as "other" because of the existing social authority of locals. In the regard of "otherness" Bhabha (1994) asserted that, "To exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness" (p. 44). The author saw a need to

identify a "third space" in order to displace "the legitimating narratives of cultural domination" (p. 1). Bhabha (1994) talked about two types of identities: "the philosophical tradition of identity as the process of self-reflection in the mirror of (human) nature; and the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in the division of Nature/Culture" (p. 46). Both definitions of identities were important for understanding how Muslim immigrant students experienced their social identities in a European context. The "division of nature" their identity could be considered the one that those students have known since their whole life. It could be linked to their family background as well as origin. But things changed together with their geographic relocation: As soon as they arrived in Europe, they started facing a completely new culture and new values. In this new environment/culture they were considered to be different from others (e.g. French, other European nations, whites, etc.). So, to avoid segregations by others, it was possible that Muslim immigrant students would want to change their social identities in order to be more like Europeans.

In this respect, Bamyeh (2010) suggested that in a new environment humans were inclined to change their identities in order to assimilate with "others" with more ease. At the same time humans usually wanted to keep their individuality within a larger social group. So, in this case a question arises: What happens to the fundamental values of identity when Muslim immigrant students wish to change their identities and to become Europeanized? Bamyeh (2010) suggested that identity could undergo a shift, but the fundamental values behind that specific identity did not carry any real changes. To continue his discussion on identities, or as he called it, "solidarities", he brought up front the concept of "fluid solidarities". If I deconstruct the phrase "fluid solidarity", it would

become clear that by "fluid" Bamyeh (2010) meant a non-fixed substance, which, as defined by Merriam Webster's Dictionary, "yields easily to external pressure" (http://thesaurus.com/browse/fluid). By "solidarities" Bamyeh (2010) meant identities. Therefore, depending on social pressure, identities could change. Those changed identities were not completely new, however. As Bamyeh (2010) asserted, what was new about those identities was the ways and manners of socialization.

In line with Bamyeh, Schmidt (2012), while observing Muslim immigrant students' identities in the United States, also observed the possibilities of identity shifts as a result of changing the country of residence. Smidt (2007) saw identity as: "Individual's understanding, often with an emotional dimension, of his or her own relationship through space and time with the world" (p. 17). By drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) theory of practice, Smidt (2007) talked about immigrant identity by dividing it into three broad categories:

1. *Imposed identities: identities which individuals or groups are unable to contest or negotiate at a particular time and place.* (p. 5)

2. *Negotiable identities: identities which individuals or groups have the power to contest at a particular time and place.* (p. 5)

3. *Assumed identities: identities which individuals or groups accept and thus do not perceive a need to contest or negotiate.* (p. 5)

Schmidt (2012) asserted that Muslim immigrants could show their assumed identity only if they felt comfortable with it and they did not feel like they should defend themselves.

While discussing the reasons for identity change, it would be appropriate and necessary to mention that immigrants were inclined towards changing their identities in order to be better assimilated with the society of their host country. Thus, as opposed to the theory of classical assimilation, the goal of which was to identify and observe how immigrant families assimilated, a newly emerged theory was trying not only to look at the process of immigrant assimilation, but also to identify the possible outcomes of the process. Thus, Portes and Zhou (1993) set forth the theory of "segmented assimilation." While observing the society of the United States, the scientists asserted that, despite its democratic value system, the country's society was unequal and stratified. Portes and Zhou (1993) talked about the existing different "segments" of the US society. The scientists observed that immigrants could assimilate with various societal segments of their choice. Thus, Portes and Zhou (1993) identified three possible pathways for assimilation, which could possibly be used by immigrants:

1. *Increasing acculturation and integration into the American middle class. (p. 83)*

2. *Acculturation and assimilation into the urban underclass, which could lead immigrants toward poverty.* (p. 83)

3. *"Selective acculturation," which was associated with preserving the immigrant's culture, traditions and values.* (p. 83)

According to Zhou (1997) an immigrant's children had better chances to assimilate compared to their parents. The theory of segmented assimilation by no means excluded the possibility of other paths to become part of American society. The theory of segmented assimilation was one of the most discussed and broad theories, which was trying to identify the paths, possibilities as well as outcomes for immigrants and their

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children. It was also one of the most important additions to existing scholarship on immigrants. Finally, by deconstructing the word "segmented," it becomes obvious that segmented assimilation can have a "variable effect on outcomes," (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Trofimova (2009) looked at the social identities of Muslim immigrants in Western Europe from a generational angle. The sociologist mentioned that the first generation of immigrants in Europe failed to assimilate. Despite this mal-assimilation, they were to some extent integrated into the social life of the host country. Trofimova (2009) asserted that first-generation Muslim immigrants have strictly retained their traditions and inherited identities, which has led to the emergence of multiculturalism in Europe. Pleschunov (2010) indicated that, though religion did not occupy a leading position in the lives of first-generation immigrants, discrimination related to religion was always present. Thus, according to Pleschunov (2010), the existing discrimination, poor socio-economic conditions, and difficulties related to access to education, contributed to the radicalization of Muslims and the strengthening of Islamic extremism in Western Europe. Trofimova (2009) explained that, though second and third-generation Muslim immigrants spoke the language of their host country and had European educations, they did not attempt to fully change their social identities and become completely Europeanized. On the contrary, Melnikov (2011) indicated that often, Muslim immigrant youths became more radical and joined extremist Islamic organizations. Melnikov (2011) saw the hostile social environment (e.g. feeling of rejection, discrimination, unemployment, segregation in educational institutions, etc.) as the main reason why young Muslim immigrants took radical steps.

Religious Identity.

In the discussion that follows, I present some sociological perspectives and theories on the notion of religious identity, which also played an important role in integration process of Muslim immigrant youth into European society. Those perspectives provided a firm background for this specific study.

Peek (2005), while discussing various theories related to identity, indicated that, "Various theories have been advanced regarding why certain individuals and communities highlight and develop religious identities, as opposed to other forms of personal and social identity such as race, ethnicity, or nationality" (p. 218). Smith's (1978) findings indicated that immigrants turned to religion because they felt confused and different from the locals in their new environment. In this regard, Kurien (1998) and Rayaprol (1997) mentioned that, according to immigrants, turning to religion helped them keep the traditions of their country of origin, and facilitated problems related to adapting to their new environment.

Bisin, Patacchini, Verdier and Zenou (2008), while looking at Muslim immigrants' cultural integration into the society of the United Kingdom, asserted that it was harder for Muslim immigrants to integrate than it was for non-Muslims:

> In terms of estimated probability of having a strong religious identity, a Muslim born in the UK and having spent there more than 30 years is comparable with a non-Muslim just arrived in the country. We also find no evidence that segregated neighborhoods breed intense religious and cultural identities for ethnic minorities, especially for Muslims. (p. 1)

The researchers explained this assertion in terms of possible factors, which could influence Muslims' slow or difficult integration. The researchers did not think that factors like education, or low paying jobs in neighborhoods where Muslims resided affected the integration process and made their attitude towards retaining their religious identity more intense. Bisin, Patacchini, Verdier, and Zenou (2008) tended to think that the causes of poor-integration of Muslims were the existing integration policies. The researchers observed that:

> The recent ethnic and racial riots mentioned in the introduction are certainly an indication that the different European integration policies have not been very successful. Our empirical results suggest that the intense and oppositional identities that give rise to such social conflicts are not directly favored by the segregation of the neighborhood in which ethnic and racial minorities tend to live. (p. 8)

Lebedev's (2011) theory on the religious identity of Muslim immigrants drew parallels between national minorities residing in Egypt (i.e., Copts) and Muslim immigrants residing in France. The researcher indicated that there was a tendency for both minority groups to highlight their religious identity by using different markers (e.g., cross-shaped tattoos, cross necklaces, head scarves, traditional Muslim attire, praying outside during the designated hours, etc.). According to Lebedev (2011), this type of attitude towards religious identity helped the minority groups retain their religious traditions and accentuate their religious belonging.

Lori Peek's (2005) theory looked at religious identity formation of Muslim immigrant youth in the United States based on social and historical contexts. Peek (2005)

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identified three main stages of religious identity formation: religion as *ascribed* identity; religion as *chosen* identity; and religion as *declared* identity (p. 1). Peek's (2005) ethnographic research showed that during the first stage of identity formation (i.e., religion as ascribed identity), Muslim second-generation immigrants indicated that they were born with that identity, and the fact of being Muslim was just taken for granted. Peek (2005) then indicated that "While they may not have consciously contemplated their religious identities during this stage, the interviewees were well aware of the pressure to assimilate to "American" values and norms" (p. 225). The second stage (i.e., religion as chosen identity) was related to Muslim youths' choice of the faith/religion by having some cognitive knowledge of what they want to be. Regarding the third stage of identity development (i.e., religion as declared identity), Peek (2005) asserted that it

…[O]ccurred in response to a crisis--the events and aftermath of September 11, 2001. The overwhelming magnitude of the events of September 11 led many students to pray more often and increased their need for a spiritual anchor, just as the events did for numerous other Americans of various faiths. Many of those interviewed reported becoming more reliant on God as they became more cognizant of their own mortality. (pp. 230-231)

The same kind of tendency was observed in Europe. The third stage of religious identity formation was especially noticeable among Muslim immigrant youth (Tolmachev, 2012).

Education Influencing Identity.

Another important notion that informed this study was that education has always played an integral role in identity development (Erikson, 1963). Formation of social

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identity could not be associated with only instances of socialization, nor could it be associated with human involvement in formal education. Education, on the one hand, assisted the formation of human identity, which was different from other biological species. The developed human identity was expected to conduct activities that were not contradictory to the existence of global interests in our environment. On the other hand, education should provide the possibility to socialize and form human connections (Bruzgalina, 2011a). Thus, the role of education has become important in the development of global and local identities. The role of education has become especially important when due to existence of multicultural societies all over the world.

But what happens to identity when education is reformed on a global scale? What happens to multicultural societies in the wake of educational reform? Any social reform should factor in the culture, history, and traditions of the country where the proposed reform was to take place. Otherwise, reforms could lead to societal complications and social tensions, and eventually fail (Lubkov, 2011). According to Bruzgalina (2011a), the goal of education should be the formation and development of identity. In this global age it is important to take into account the multiculturalism all over the world before making major educational reforms. Maleychuk (2007), in line with Zirkel (2008), mentioned the importance of multicultural education, especially in this age of globalization. Multicultural education could be beneficial for immigrants (Maleychuk, 2007), as it could promote their integration into society.

Sides and Citrin (2007) looked at the influence of education on Europeans' opinions towards the immigrant identities and showed that education could play an important role in immigrants' perceptions of their own identities. European youth saw

Muslim immigrants the way they were taught to see them. In line with Sides and Citrin (2007), Galavin (2010) in his theoretical perspective on education's role in European perception of immigration, mentioned that education and even educational policy could play a crucial role. The researcher found that education could have a power to change prejudices of Europeans towards the immigrant population (Galavin, 2010).

Another study that looked at Muslim student identities in the United States and informed the present research was Shabana Mir's (2014) ethnographic research entitled "Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity." In her research, Mir (2014) observed women from Muslim backgrounds who studied on Washington, D.C., college campuses. Since the research was conducted in post 9/11 America, it revealed that Muslim females, who were raised in the United States, faced prejudices towards them coming from both the Muslim community as well as non-Muslim community. The author in her study emphasized identity construction among these women. Mir (2014) accentuated leisure related practices like drinking, dating, dress-code, etc., in order to be able to understand and reveal the level of integration of American Muslim women into campus life. The research also paid attention to the attitudes of these women towards building social networks and being socially active. This research became a powerful key in voicing the means which Muslim women used to stress their individuality, femaleness and at the same time being Americans on college campuses. In her conclusion, however, the author stressed that higher educational institutions were still in need of promoting the notion religious diversity.

Literature on European Muslims Identity and the Role of Education in their Lives

With rise of the Muslim population in Europe, numerous studies and research

works have been conducted to understand how European society deals with the

multicultural environment, what effects immigration might have on European society,

and whether the rising Muslim population might prove harmful to the European way of

life. In my systematic review of scholarship on discussions over immigrants' identities in

Europe (both social and religious), education/educational policy's role in the integration

of immigrant population into European society. I not only explored Anglo-American

research literature, but also went through Spanish, Italian, French, Russian, and Armenian

studies in order to gain a more in-depth understanding about the research that I have

undertaken. However, within the existing studies, the research that discussed experiences

with Muslim populations, was focused on Muslim immigrants in Europe. The existing

literature did not focus on younger generations of Muslim immigrants, or, more

specifically, Muslim immigrant students. These studies were mostly directed towards the

Muslim immigrant population in Western Europe. Consideration should also be given to

Muslims residing in Eastern Europe, especially states currently in transition process (i.e.,

Armenia). When a country is in a transition period, all aspects of social and political life

can be affected, including immigration and education. Thus, it is important to look at the

experiences of Muslims in a transitioning Eastern European state like Armenia as well.

Social and Religious Identities of Muslim Immigrants

The Muslim population of Europe has become a hot research topic for social

scientists. In the past ten years, sociologists, jurists, and political scientists have argued a

lot around the topic of Muslim immigrants' identities, but they have been facing the

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major obstacle of trying to identify a political/social approach which would be appropriate for all Muslims residing in Europe (Andújar-Chevrollier, 2006). When it comes down to Muslim immigrant youth, it becomes even more difficult because of factors like "multiplicity of identities and conflicting relationships" between the older generation of immigrants and the host society which make it harder to define the identities of younger generations of Muslim immigrants (De Andrés, 2011).

Citrin and Sides (2004) suggested that: "European and national identities are social identities. They refer to a dimension of the individual's self-concept shared with some but not all other people. A social identity therefore simultaneously integrates people and divides them" (p. 165). Social identity set Muslim immigrants apart from Europeans and other immigrants. Research showed that the approach towards Muslim immigrant identity was mostly based on their religious identity, which meant that the identity (e.g., social, ethnic, cultural, racial, personal, etc.) of a Muslim immigrant was almost always primarily associated with his/her religion (Hermann, 2004).

Another approach towards Muslim immigrants' identity is *transnational* in nature. Researchers often used this term while examining the identities of Muslim immigrants residing in Europe. What did it mean to have a transnational identity? According to research, Muslims were considered to have transnational identities because they still retained the values, traditions and customs of their country of origin while residing in Europe (Alvarez-Miranda, 2007). Muslim immigrants were considered to have transnational identities because, although they established their permanent residency in various European states as well as they had vague possibilities to return to their country of origin, they practiced their customs in their new countries of residence. The

maintenance of those customs contributed to the validity of transnational identities

(Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999; Morawska, 2004; Vertovec, 2004).

In line with the notion of "transnational identities," studies on Muslim immigrants in Europe mentioned the rise of multiculturalism in Europe. In this regard the attention of researchers was caught by the fact that identities of "newcomers" could change in their new context (AlSayyad & Castells, 2002). At the same time, research indicated that Muslims' religious, and ethnic identity was still retained, causing Europeans to think of Muslim immigrants as "others," (AlSayyad and Castells, 2002). Being labeled an "other" made the whole assimilation and integration process complicated for European Muslim immigrants, even for second and third generations. As Husain and O'Brien (2000) put it,

> The predominant 'us'/ 'other' dichotomy embedded in historical and political encounters has raised significant issues affecting mutual integration and acceptance. On the one hand, European essentializing of both their own and Muslim cultures has fixed the integration debate in static stereotypes. On the other hand, Muslims in search of social cohesion are increasingly attracted to the concept of a fixed, homogeneous supranational ummah. (p. 2).

The word "ummah" referred to community of Muslims bound together by religious ties.

Thus, the presence of Muslims in Europe made notions related to citizenship, civil society, inclusion, participation, exclusion, etc. top issues to be re-examined (AlSayyad & Castells, 2002). In regard with the preservation of ethnic and religious identities by Muslim immigrants, some researchers (Malakhov, 2009) argued that, according to Europeans, the Muslim identity endangered the traditional Christian identity. To continue

the discussion on ethnic identities of Muslim immigrants, Sackmann, Peters, and Faist (2003) asserted:

> Communications and political and economic interactions increasingly cross the borders of states, nations and ethnic communities, and yet symbolic borders and separate group identities are nevertheless asserted. The perceived efforts of migrants to maintain their cultural and ethnic identities are often blamed as a cause of conflict within nation states. (p. 4)

Assumptions related to rising prejudices towards the identity of Muslim immigrants gave way to literature on Muslim immigrants in Europe. The literature focused on Muslim immigrants' religious identity while emphasizing their ethnic and cultural backgrounds (referring to their communities and organizational patterns). The research on Muslim immigrants' religious identity was sometimes of a quantitative nature and based on statistical analysis among various European states (Nielsen, 2004). Nielsen (2004) focused on immigrants' thoughts about religion, education, and the role of the family. While analyzing rough statistical data on Muslim immigrants of different European countries, Nielsen (2004) observed the existence of prejudices towards Muslims that were based on stereotypes of Islam (e.g., Islamic terrorists, religious fundamentalists, Muslim gangs, etc.). The research on existing prejudices showed that those were almost always associated with the Muslim immigrant populations' religious identity, especially after the events of 9/11. Those prejudices did not only exist in the Western part of Europe, as they were also applicable to many Eastern European countries (Strabac & Listhaug, 2007). A comparative research study among Muslim and non-

Muslim immigrant groups by Strabac and Listhaug (2007) showed that non-Muslims showed more favor towards Europeans than towards Muslim immigrants.

An interesting tendency related to the discussion of Muslim immigrants in Europe can be observed in research: Many researchers, (Elósegui Itxaso, 2003; Hargreaves, 2006; Sahakyan, 2008) specifically observed Muslim women while discussing the identity of Muslim immigrants. In many cases, research suggested that it was very hard for Muslim immigrant females to assimilate finding it difficult or impossible to leave their habits in the past and live with new values. Sahakyan (2008), in his discussion on Muslim identity, asserted that Muslim immigrant women were scared to sever their religious ties. Sahakyan (2008) mentioned that even in the European reality they still covered their heads and prayed at the designated times. Similarly, Elósegui Itxaso (2003) indicated that Muslim immigrant females almost never integrated into European society; for them, Islam came first.

Klausen and Myers (2006), while trying to reveal issues related to Muslim immigrants' identities in Western Europe and their integration into European society, focused their attention on European Muslim leaders. The study encompassed six Western European states: The Netherlands, Germany, France, Britain, Denmark, and Sweden. During a two-year study, the researchers managed to conduct interviews with more than 300 Muslim leaders residing in these states. Among the interviewees there were lawyers, religious leaders, members of parliament, and other authority figures. Klausen and Myers (2006) wanted to identify strategies that could lead to successful integration of Muslim population into European society. The findings of the research showed that stereotypes attached to Muslim immigrants by local Europeans did not tell us the truth about

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Muslims. According to Klausen and Myers (2006), the narratives of European Muslim leaders showed that in most cases their worldview was liberal and secular. So, the problem of integrating the Muslim immigrants lies with the Europeans.

Frank Gesemann's (2005) research was focused on various social issues (e.g., identity, religion, education, integration) of a younger generation of Muslim immigrants, specifically in Germany. The researcher used quantitative research methods in his study. Based on statistical analysis, the results of the research revealed that Turkish, Moroccan, and Lebanese Muslim immigrants did not fully integrate into European society. The researcher asserted that the reason for their poor-integration was their low success in education and poor knowledge of German. Gesemann (2005) attributed their low linguistic skills to the fact that young Muslim immigrants did not interact with Germans. Instead, they made friends among different groups of immigrants with the same religious background. Gesemann (2005) asserted that,

> The sense of social uncertainty prevailing among Turkish and Arabic youths can be interpreted not only as stemming from less success in the educational system, a deficit of perspectives for the future and the increasing competition for ever scarcer jobs and apprenticeship positions. It is also to be seen as an expression of inter-generational and inter-cultural conflicts. These youths are particularly likely to be affected by the ambivalence of the modern world which, on the one hand, means a general broadening of young people's chances for self-realization but at the same time also an intensification of economic inequalities for certain (marginal) groups in the society. (p. 20)

The above discussion showed that there were few studies focusing on identities of Muslim immigrants residing in Western Europe. Also, the discussion of literature revealed that the existing studies were focused on the Muslim immigrant population in general, and that it often associated religious identity with social identity or vice versa. Most of the studies did not explain the existing problems based on the experiences of Muslim immigrants, nor were Eastern European states discussed in most of the studies. Thus, in my study I focused on Muslim immigrant youth residing both in Western (e.g. Germany and France) and Eastern (i.e. Armenia) Europe and tried to reveal their experiences on their social and religious identities based on their own narratives.

Education's Role in Muslim Immigrants' Life

Many research works found education to be the main means of integration for Muslim immigrants into European society. Research that focused on the interplay of education and the integration of Muslim immigrants mostly drew upon factors like academic attainment of Muslim immigrant students, dropout rates, introduction of new classes into schools, which could either hinder or promote the integration of Muslims (Gesemann, 2005). There were also studies which focused on the identity of Muslim immigrants (mostly religious) within the framework of general education. Also, research gave consideration to Muslim female students, while discussing the role of Education (Jackson, 2008).

Gesemann (2005) discussed information regarding the immigrant students' academic progress, based on the new the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and IGLU (International Primary School Reading Study) comparative studies Gesemann (2005) mentioned:

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The results of the PISA comparative study conducted by the OECD show that the differences in reading competence among youths from upper and lower social classes is greater in Germany than in any other country participating in the study. Affected here in particular are children of the working class and of immigrants. Pupils 15 years of age, both of whose parents were born in Germany, have chances of attending Realschule or Gymnasium which are two to three times as good as pupils of the same age who come from pure immigrant families. (p. 10)

The research suggested that there should be supplementary education designed for immigrants and children of working-class families to promote the entire integration process.

Many researchers saw integration of young Muslim immigrants through the introduction of religious education into general education. In this regard, Jackson (2008) indicated that European inter-governmental institutions emphasized and advocated the study of religion in public schools all over Europe. OSCE has developed recommendations regarding the integration of religious study into the school curriculum. While trying to integrate religious studies into public education, European governments realized that appropriate pedagogical approach should be developed, which should be engaging for all students and should address the importance of religious identity. Jackson (2010) mentioned that through integration of religious studies, Europe hoped to engage immigrants in European civics.

When it comes to higher education, the whole picture regarding the integration of Muslim immigrant students gets even more confusing. Higher educational institutions were considered to be spaces where students could interact and engage in different issues

related to academic and social life. Immigrant students studying at universities were not exceptions (Scott, 2002). Asmar (2006) and Gilliat-Ray (2000) asserted that some needs of Muslim students had to be met to make their integration process into European society smoother and easier. The list of those needs was mostly related to religious rituals (e.g., praying, available prayer space, Halal food consumption, etc.). Modood (2005) criticized the approach of the European education system towards the Muslim immigrant population, asserting that the practiced approach did not respect multiculturalism. Modood (2005) observed that European universities did not really satisfy the basic needs of Muslim immigrant students, thus hindering the students' social integration. According to Modood (2005), there should be an intercultural dialogue to promote Muslims' social engagement. Ortuno (2009), in line with Modood (2005), emphasized the absence of dialogue between locals and immigrants.

Another major aspect hindering the integration of Muslims was the overall discrimination against them. The increase in discrimination was especially noticeable after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Appleton (2005a) pointed out that according to Muslim immigrant students, the attitude of Europeans towards them sharply shifted towards the negative after 9/11. Muslim students experienced not only verbal but also physical attacks by local Europeans. Appleton (2005b) indicated that those attacks made Muslim students feel apathetic towards their studies, as well as integration into European society in general. Regarding the negative attitude towards Muslim students, Tyrer and Ahmad (2006) noticed the presence of Islamophobia on the campuses of universities. The negative attitude was especially obvious towards Muslim female students, who usually wore their traditional dresses and covered their heads.

Though many years have passed after the tragic events of 9/11, the situation for Muslim students in Europe has not improved. Jaloyan (2008), after interviewing 20 Muslim immigrant students studying in higher educational institutions, explained that Muslim students experienced hardships. These hardships were not because they did not study hard or had issues related to French, but because of their religious background. Jaloyan's study and his interviews with those twenty students showed that European professors had negative attitudes towards Muslims, and especially towards Muslim females, because, as Jaloyan (2008) mentioned, "It is easier to identify the female's religious belonging sometimes, than that of males" (p. 37).

Another notable study regarding Muslims' integration is Kalinin's research in 2010. Through interviewing 10 European students from France, UK, and Spain, the researcher tried to understand their perception of their Muslim peers. The study revealed that the attitudes of Europeans towards their Muslim immigrants differed. Some students mentioned that they had Muslim friends. Others indicated that Muslims presented a potential danger for the future of Europe. There were also students that singled out the role of media in shaping negative attitudes towards the Muslim population in general. Kalinin (2010) suggested that the development of special programs at higher educational institutions where locals and immigrants could get together and tell their stories to each other could help to solve the issue of negative attitudes. The study concluded that those integrative programs could be the beginning of mutual understanding, which could help both parties. To summarize his research results, Kalinin (2010) mentioned that in this respect policy makers could try to make educational policies more flexible, stating, "Course credits…they may be important. But they lose importance, when not every

student is engaged. This means that there is a problem, which policy makers could try to fix" (p. 76).

Mitchell (2004), while discussing neoliberal governmentality and its influence on European education asserted that,

Both the policies and the programs associated with education and training are becoming more oriented towards the formation of mobile, flexible, and self-governing European laborers and less oriented towards an institutionalized affirmation of personal development and individual or group 'difference'. (p. 3)

Mitchell (2004) thought that the flexibility of the European educational system should make the integration of immigrants in general easier. But was this also true for Muslim immigrants? How did Muslim immigrants see the role of education in promoting their own integration?

The review of related studies revealed many important aspects (e.g. social and religious identity; family background, gender and age related issues, etc.) which I considered in my own research as well. It should be noted that the studies that I have reviewed did not inform us about how Muslims saw the change in education and educational policy (and how it did or did not promote their integration into European society). It is my hope that my study could be a humble contribute to the existing literature and provide insight into the perspectives of Muslim immigrant students on changes in education that could facilitate their social engagement and help build intercultural dialogue.

Chapter 3

Narrative Inquiry Design for Germany, France and Armenia

Qualitative Research

Because my research involves international and comparative elements, and because I focused on concepts like social and religious identity and the interplay of educational policy and integration as human experiences, I chose qualitative methods of inquiry. By using qualitative methods, I was able to conduct a more nuanced examination; I was able to better focus, understand, explain, and interpret the collected empirical data. Because the interplay of education, social and religious identity, and the integration of Muslim immigrant students into European civil society is a research topic which has not been well studied, qualitative research was useful. My research was more individualized with data collected through individual conversations with the participants of my research.

I explored how Muslim immigrant students experienced higher education in Europe. Maxwell (2005) indicated that it was important to understand "the context in which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions" (p. 22). As my research topic made it clear, I was interested in understanding how Muslim immigrant students, while studying at higher educational institutions in France, Germany, and Armenia, perceived their social and religious identities in a European context, as well as how educational policy influenced their integration into the European context. During my research I was trying to shed light on narratives of Muslim students and their

individual stories, which I called "cases" within the framework of my study. Maxwell (2005) argued that qualitative research inquiry was characterized as being more or less open and flexible.

Finally, qualitative research methodology enabled a better understanding of the motivations, values, and attitudes that Muslim immigrant students had towards their life in Europe. Instead of focusing on numbers (e.g., quantitative methods), I was focusing on words and text, which according to Richardson and St Pierre (2005), helped me "find the meaning" (p. 961).

Research Approach

Narrative approach to case study.

My research examined a particular group of participants and their experiences in a specific context (e.g., European context). At the same time, it was important to provide detailed context about the researched phenomenon through individual stories. Since I was conducting research on Muslim immigrant students in the European context, it meant that I was not attempting to look for or focus on a universal truth. Instead, I, as the researcher, sought to examine and describe of what was happening. According to Yin (1984), it was an empirical inquiry which enabled researchers to investigate a "contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context" (p. 23). Further, Yin (1984) indicated that there were "no clearly defined boundaries between phenomenon and the context" and in this respect he recommended the use of multiple sources of evidence. Taking into account the importance of the interrelationship between phenomenon and the context, that the case study approach was the most appropriate for my research, as I was examining Muslim immigrant students in a European context.

Thomas (2011) described case study as: "analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that were studied holistically by one or more methods" (p. 17). To study Muslim immigrant students (i.e., persons) currently residing in Europe and the influence of education policy (i.e., policies) on their integration into the European society holistically, case studies could offer depth of understanding of European social structures to answer the questions.

Yin (1994), Stake (1995, 1998), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Gillham (2001) agreed that before conducting case studies, there should be individual cases to consider. Stake (2006) emphasized that the main focus of a case study is "the object to be studied" (p. 2). In my research, each individual Muslim immigrant student was considered as "a case" to be studied.

I conducted this research in three distinct European countries, France, Germany, and Armenia. Even though these three states employed the same educational policy framework (i.e., the Bologna Process) and were located in Eastern and Western Europe, they were distinct in many aspects (geographical position, culture, tradition, language, etc.). There was a good chance that there were diverse Muslim immigrant students with distinct experiences, depending on where in the abovementioned countries they resided. Thus, it became important for me, as a researcher, to explore several cases related to this specific phenomenon. As Stake (2006) and Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) suggested, the exploration of multiple cases enabled an in-depth understanding of the bigger picture. In this regard, I selected for my research multiple comparative case study approach, which allowed me to conduct an in-depth examination of Muslim immigrant students' experiences in higher educational institutions in France, Germany, and Armenia.

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Several studies related to Muslim immigrants' identity employed a case study approach for its methodology. Tahar Ben Jelloun (2003) in his book "Racism Explained to my Daughter" used a case study methodology, where the author observed a conversation of a mother and daughter who were talking about Muslim immigrant identity in France. The author conducted his entire study in an interview format (i.e., question and answer), which drew a detailed picture of the experiences of Muslim immigrants residing in France. Though the book did not employ multiple sources for analysis, this single case study gave a profound picture of identity, racism, and religion.

The case study employed by Elizabeth Boosahda (2003) in her book entitled "Arab-American Faces and Voices" was similar to my research in many ways. Boosahda (2003), who was a third-generation Arab American, based her study on more than two hundred individual interviews. She also included archival documents and photographs related to the first generation of Arab-Americans that gave detailed information on history of those communities. Another similarity between Boosahda's (2003) research and the present study was that the author also used multiple, comparative case study methodology, by focusing on the Arab-American communities both in North and South America. The interviews that Boosahda (2003) conducted, as well as the photos and historical documentation, drew a detailed and comprehensible picture of experiences of those immigrants and the lives of their descendants.

Through multiple, comparative case study methodology, the author was able to describe quite complicated and complex social contexts (e.g. Northern and Southern United States) and how the Arab-American immigrants there integrated into those contexts. Boosahda's (2003) book was based on description, where more than two

hundred interviews formed a single narrative/story of every individual included in this study.

Presentation of Data Based on Stories of Muslim Students

The role of narrative inquiry.

"The term narrative carries many meanings and is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines, often synonymously with story the narrative scholar (pays) analytic attention to how the facts got assembled that way. For whom was this story constructed, how was it made and for what purpose? What cultural discourses does it draw on—take for granted? What does it accomplish?" (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, pp.428-429)

Research that uses narration and "story-telling" captures interest and is often easier to understand. Thus, I decided to use the narrative format and tell the story of Muslim immigrant students residing in France, Germany, and Armenia in a manner that could capture the attention of my readers.

Defining narrative.

Narrative reveals closely related events, phenomena, and actions that happened in the past (Cooper & Heck, 1995, p. 201). Narratives do not only describe action. On the contrary, narratives tell about actions through informing the reader of what happened. According to R. Barthes (1966), narration is very closely related to space and time. Barthes (1966) asserted that meaning could be built through narration and that the narration "is always there, like life itself." What is central among most of the narrative approaches is the notion of story, the pattern of different events in life, and meaning. Riessman (2008) saw narratives as something having a specific purpose and goal, which

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represented a form of detailed information in modern social research. In line with

Riessman and Quinney (2005), Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, and Jones (2005) argued that

narrative inquiry could assist the researcher's data collection process, enable better

representation of the cases, and assist the researcher in conducting cross-case

comparative analysis.

I conducted interviews with Muslim immigrant students and collected written

narratives from the student-participants on their experiences as Muslim immigrant

students residing in Europe. I built my cases and data collecting based on what the

students told (e.g., storytelling) about their lives in European higher educational

institutions, as well as how they perceived the issues related to their social and religious

identities. This type of approach helped me to understand how social and the religious

identities of the participants were influenced by their own experiences. Chase (2005),

indicated that the researcher could focus on identity through narrative inquiry, and the

formation of identity was influenced by the context where those individual identities were

located.

An example of narrative inquiry is Maira's (2004) study of South Asian

immigrant youth from Muslim backgrounds. This study informed my research in many

ways (e.g. methods, design, conducting interviews, immigrant identity, policy, influence

of policy on identity, prejudices towards Muslims, etc.). The author built her narrative on

stories of Muslim immigrant youth after the events of 9/11. According to Maira (2004)

herself, the study could be described as an "ethnography where the young research

participants are working-class, Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi immigrant students in

the public high school in Cambridge, Massachusetts" (p. 2). Maira (2004) emphasized the

perception of cultural citizenship by these youths. She not only based her data collection

just on interviewing the student-participants but also she involved in her research

interviews with immigrant parents, community and religious leaders' school staff, and

city officials. Maira's (2004) narrative approach helped me understand young Muslim

immigrants' perception of their citizenship as well as how those youngsters defined

nationalism.

Another important study similar to my research was Miller's (2010) study, where

she used narrative inquiry to explore the Beur (Muslim minority population residing in

France) youth. In her study, Miller (2010) looked at how the Beur youth "perceives their

individual and collective cultural identity" (p. 14). While conducting her study she

applied qualitative research methodology including: interviews with both French and

Beur, analysis of movies related to Beur population, analysis of French and Arabic rap

songs composed and sung by Muslim immigrant artists, and observations of traditional

rituals of the Muslim immigrant population (e.g., Eid el-Kabeer). The author also

attended a protest for Gaza organized by Muslim immigrants. Miller (2010), while

conducting her data collection, was able to have casual conversations with Moroccan and

Algerian immigrants, enabling her to observe the immigrant youth in various life

situations. This study informed me about the interconnectedness of young Muslim

immigrant identity and the narrative.

Universities

Science Po, University Frankfurt Am Main and Yerevan State University.

The study was conducted in three major institutions in France, Germany, and

Armenia. Sciences Po University (The Middle Eastern and Mediterranean Undergraduate

College of Menton) is located in Menton, France. Based on information from Science Po University internal sources, there were around 120 students from a Muslim backgrounds enrolled in various departments at this university. Since the Science Po University specializes in Middle East and Mediterranean region, it attracts many Muslim students residing in France. Most of the students studying at Science Po were descendants of African Muslim immigrants. Specifically, they were of Moroccan, Egyptian, Algerian, and Tunisian descent.

The German portion of my research was conducted at Frankfurt University. According to the representative of Frankfurt University Students' admission office, there were about 860 students from a Muslim background studying at the university, comprising about 2% of the entire student population. Most of the Muslim students studying at the University of Frankfurt came from Turkish backgrounds. There were also students from Bosnia, Lebanon, Palestine, etc.

I conducted Armenian portion of my research at Yerevan State University, my alma mater. The situation with Muslim immigrant students was a little bit different as the number of immigrants from a Muslim background studying at Yerevan State University (YSU) was limited. According to vice-rector for Academic Affairs of YSU, there were a total of fifty two students from Muslim backgrounds studying at YSU, ten of which already held Armenian citizenship. It is important to mention that although, there were only fifty two Muslim students from immigrant backgrounds studying at Yerevan State University, they were from diverse countries, gender as well as family backgrounds (e.g. Persian, Egyptian, Russian, Uzbek, Syrian, Lebanese, and Kurdish).

Before selecting the abovementioned universities, I contacted many higher education institutions all over France, Germany and Armenia. I explained the purpose of my study and only got positive replies from the three above mentioned universities. Moreover, I established contacts in those three universities, who helped me in recruiting the student-participants in all three higher education institutions.

Within the framework of this research I focused mostly on undergraduate students, though I interviewed a graduate student as well. In contrast with graduate programs, who did not have to participate in all classes, undergraduate students were required to participate in all classes in order to pass their exams and obtain their respective undergraduate degrees. Thus, the participants of my study were predominantly undergraduate Muslim immigrant students from the above mentioned universities.

Selection of Muslim Student-Participants

Before selecting participants for my research, I started thinking about what exactly I expected to hear from the student-participants. For my study I needed to find participants who would be willing to tell me their stories, related to their education as Muslim immigrants in Europe. These stories had to vividly describe their experiences with social and religious identity, as well as, civic integration and related issues, which would enable me understand their lives in Europe as well as answer my research questions. Patton (2002), in this regard, mentioned the importance of having participants of various backgrounds. Thus, for me it was important to have diverse group of participants. More specifically, I was looking for students of diverse gender, who were both religious as well as not very religious. While selecting participants for my research I also took into consideration the following important question: What was the reason that

brought the families of these Muslim immigrant students to Europe? According to Ben-David (2009),

> After World War II, countries such as France, Belgium, and Germany started to allow and even entice foreign workers to come. The economic boom in those countries attracted immigrants, first from poor southern European countries such as Italy and Spain, and then from the far shores of the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East. (p. 1)

In contrast with Ben-David (2009), Mukhin (2011) observed that the current trend differed from past trends, asserting that second-generation Muslim immigrants had strong aspirations towards getting educated and building their careers, which would make their integration into European society easier. Thus, it was also important to know the participants' background related to reasons of migration, which would enable me to better understand their stories and would give more depth to my research. Also, their families' history of migration could also influence the Muslim immigrant students' perception of their social and religious identities in European society and the influence of education on their integration into somewhat non-traditional civic life.

Also, while selecting participants for my research, I looked at the education of participants' parents. In this regard it was interesting to interact with participants of various family backgrounds (e.g., highly-educated, less-educated, or non-educated). The level of education of their family members could also influence their thinking and their perceptions around the questions raised in the present research.

According to Creswell et al. (2007), fewer participants of interview could provide with "thick and rich" stories. Those stories could have more in-depth focus on questions

raised during the interview. Thus, I decided to interview fewer Muslim immigrant students, hoping to get more informative and detailed responses to my questions.

Initial focus-group interviews.

It was possible that there would be many students, who would be willing to volunteer for this research. As I have mentioned before I was looking for diversity among student-participants. Having students from diverse background would allow me to gather more diverse data and make the problems voiced by student-participants clearer. In order to have the desired diversity among the interviewees as well as student-participants, who had stories to share, I conducted three initial focus group interviews (e.g. one for each target country) with volunteers for my research in order identify what range of experiences related to my research questions the students had. I conducted the focus group interview via skype. Six students from each country participated in focus groups. Most of the focus group participants spoke English because they had English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum.

As a result, I was able to select diverse group of student-participants. The focus groups also assisted me in selecting the group of participants compliant with the goals of my research.

Recruitment.

Recruiting the participants was one of the key points in the entire selection process. I had contacts in the abovementioned three universities, who helped me with the recruitment process. The main means to find and recruit potentially interested participants was through the distribution of flyers in the selected universities. My contacts helped me by posting flyers in the departments and offices for student affairs in the selected

universities. Communication with potential student-participants took place via email. The clarity of the flyers and emails enabled the potential student-participants to understand the sense of this study, as well as respond to my requests with their stories and experiences related to their social and religious identity, education, and integration issues that they wanted to share.

Data on Muslim Student-Participants

Following is the discussion of the methods that I used for collecting and analyzing the data. I used two main sources to gather data for my research: personal interviews with student-participants and their written reflections. I collected the data in 2014. I chose English as the working language for data collection, despite the fact that in Armenia I had the choice of using Armenian or Russian. First of all, student-participants could speak English and they were fluent enough to understand and answer my questions. Secondly, I chose English because having my data in English would make it easier to analyze it without missing out important details, while translating and interpreting the data.

Interviews

Interviewing in general is a quite informative process. The data collected makes it possible to become more enlightened and learn more about the issues the research is focused on. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) described interviews as an "alternative" source of finding answers to questions of interest. Inspired by this definition, I was able to gather important data by interviewing student-participants on their experiences as Muslim immigrant students. Research in the field of phenomenology suggests that interviews should consist of three interview series: Focused life experiences; the details of experience; and reflection on the meaning (Mills, 2010; Seidman, 1998; Smagorinsky,

2008). Thus, based on this suggestion, I divided my interviews into the following three parts:

First interview.

Each student participant and the researcher got to know each other. Students, in a semi-structured interview, shared the details of their experiences related to their life in Europe as Muslim immigrants and as students from a Muslim background. I conducted the first interview on a video call via Skype. I recorded the interviews for future analysis. I completely perceived both the advantages and disadvantages of using Skype for this research. The main advantage of the interviews was that I could ask my questions, and engage in a dialogue with the interviewee with the expectation that all my questions would be answered. If not, the interview would allow me to use probes. The main disadvantage of a Skype interview was that interviewees sometimes felt uncomfortable and did not want to answer some of the questions and the virtual interaction was the main reason for this. In summary, in the first series of interviews the participants elucidated their experiences as Muslim immigrants in their respective European state (e.g. background information).

Second interview.

During the second series of interviews, the main focus was the research questions, covering the students' social and religious identity, the problems they faced in their respective higher educational institutions, how they saw the influence of educational policy (i.e., the Bologna Process) on their civic integration process, and what aspects they thought could be changed within the framework of the Bologna Process to facilitate their integration into European society. I conducted the second interview in person by

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travelling to the target countries and universities mentioned above. My personal and direct interaction with the students allowed more flexibility and openness in terms of responses. Also, during the second interview students were already familiar with me.

Third interview.

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008) "Each person gives meaning to events in light of his or her own biography and experiences, according to gender, time and place, cultural, political, religious, and professional backgrounds" (p. 10). Taking these factors into account, the third round of interviews focused on discussing and better understanding the first two interviews. During this interview I tried to engage participants in giving more in-depth meaning to the issues and problems discussed before. Again, I conducted the third interview in person.

To continue the discussion on the interviews, I should mention that the above mentioned method was my main means of data collection. I was able to gain in-depth information by conducting these interviews, which served as firm basis enabling me to answer my research questions. The interviews were individual. During individual interviews students felt more comfortable in sharing their stories and it was easier to establish dialogue with them. As a final outcome I had nine different narratives of Muslim immigrant students, each of which were equally important for me. By conducting individual interviews, I could collect data, which drew on pluralities, as well as, differences of students' opinions. Those differences helped me in identifying problems. Finally, as Marshall and Rossman (2006) explained, interviews allowed me to reveal Muslim immigrant students' approach towards their own identities, education and social integration in Europe.

Reflections Written by Muslim Student-Participants

I chose written reflections as another source of data because written reflections could provide more comprehensive data and make the entire data collection process more informative. In this regard, I would like to mention that I was basing my choice of written reflections on my personal experience. While working as a research assistant at the Office of Program Evaluation the University of South Carolina, I conducted many focus groups, as well as individual interviews after which the interview participants were requested to write reflections around the questions asked during the interview. To my great surprise, those written reflections were more detailed and uncovered some issues which were not voiced during the interviews. Hubbard and Power (1999) and Mills (2003), while discussing qualitative research methodology and its practical use, emphasized that data from written reflections together with interviews "draw patterns and categories from responses" (p. 33). Those responses were especially useful for data analysis.

By providing the research participants with an opportunity to share their stories in a written format made my data richer and more detailed in content. During interviews there were instances where, for example, participants felt uncomfortable to express their feelings orally, or they forgot some details related to questions asked. Also, during interviews students felt somewhat pressured by the question and answer format and left out details. Written reflections allowed time for thinking and bringing in more details regarding the problems discussed.

Understanding the Data Provided by Student-Participants

Single case analysis.

When using the case study method of data collection and analysis I relied on the theoretical perspective of my research, as well as the guiding questions of this study. Polit and Hungler (1983) indicated that the researcher, while using the case study approach: "attempts to analyze the variables relevant to the subject under study" (p. 47). I have mentioned above that I used multiple sources of data. Thus, I was able to collect a fair amount of data, among which some were not of very high importance for this specific study. What data then did I focus on and how did I identify the data of my interest? I focused on the data that was most relevant to the conceptual and theoretical framework of my research, as well as, the data that corresponded to or was closest to my research questions. Relying on my guiding research questions, as well as, the theoretical framework of my study, assisted me in examining and building each individual case.

Key (1997) suggested that, "in the case study the focus may not be generalization but on understanding the particulars of that case in its complexity" (p. 4.) To be able to understand the particular elements of each case, I put together the collected data from all sources for every single case. While organizing the data I did what Layder (1998) suggested and "pre-coded" reviewed data (e.g. underlining, circling, highlighting, etc.). The "pre-coding" of data made the coding process easier. As soon as I put together the data for each individual participant, I started examining each participant's case and developing a rough draft of the codebook. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) recommended that while coding data "researchers must keep the theoretical framework, as well as, research questions in front not to lose the focus from the main goal of the research and

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help the researcher in composing relevant codes" (p. 44). Starting from that point, the codebook served as one of the most important means to guide my further analysis. Strauss (1987) asserted that the codebook: "provides an analytic opportunity to organize and reorganize the codes into major categories and subcategories. It also provides a comparative list if you are working with multiple participants and sites" (p. 21). As suggested by Strauss (1987), it was important to categorize my codes into major categories and sub-categories, where major categorized codes contained the meaning of most core ideas. The coding, I did, was thematic, which assisted me in comparing the cases. After the coding process was complete, the interpretation process took its turn. Strauss (1987) mentioned that the connection between codes and questions guiding the research came onto surface during the data interpretation process.

Cross-case analysis.

Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008) asserted that: "Cross-case analysis is a research method that can mobilize knowledge from individual case studies. According to authors: "Mobilization of case knowledge occurs when researchers accumulated case knowledge, compare and contrast cases, and in doing so, produce new knowledge" (p. 1). After finalizing each individual case analysis, I started cross-case analysis among individual cases. This enabled me to find patterns among cases and compare them. Each individual case was of equal importance for me. Similarly, no single problem related to this research voiced in each case was left behind this study, while conducting cross-case analysis. According to Creswell (1998), when having/comparing multiple cases,

> First provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called
> a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called

a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of

the case. (p. 63)

Through cross-comparative analysis of the cases I was able to find commonalities

and differences among cases. In my introduction to this study I have mentioned that

narration played a central role in it. To keep the narrative's role as central as possible, I

used a thematic cross-case analysis approach which enabled me to keep my focus on the

meaning and the content of narrative.

Methodological Issues

Trustworthiness.

No research is perfect. A researcher's role is to minimize imperfections so that

they will not interfere with the final outcome of the research. I tried to build

trustworthiness based on what Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggested in his study, and drew

a table of possible strategies, which could build trustworthiness. I applied credibility,

confirmability, and dependability in my own research. In order to have credible and

dependable study and to be accurate in interpreting my data, I involved researchers

outside of this study (e.g. my colleagues, my professors, etc.) in checking and processing

the data of the present research. Following is the discussion of strategies that I used.

Triangulation.

According to Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011),

Validity, in qualitative research, refers to whether the findings of a study are true

and certain—'true' in the sense that research findings accurately reflect the

situation, and 'certain' in the sense that research findings are supported by the

evidence. Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and

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establish validity in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives. (p. 1)

In this study, it was appropriate to use data triangulation. More specifically, to comply with the rule of multiple sources of data within the framework of data triangulation, I involved research participants in the transcript-checking process to make the data as valid as possible. After the transcriptions were coded and the data was analyzed, it went back again to the research participants "to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence" (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011, p. 3). Data triangulation helped me build credibility.

Reflexivity.

I got into the habit of using reflexive journals thanks to my Action Research class at the University of South Carolina. Reflexive journals appeared to be very helpful, especially when I was interacting with students. Those journals helped me to be critical towards myself. In the case of the present research I tried to reflect my study steps by putting them down in the journal. I looked for negative as well as positive aspects of my steps. In the journal I also discussed the theories I used in the study, methods that I applied, and reflections on the study in general. Reflexivity complied with the confirmability strategy.

Peer Examination.

While conducting research, it is always important to know whether or not the final outcome of the research complies with the collected data. I should mention again that my research was conducted in three different settings located in three different countries. Thus, I involved the peer examination criteria, which helped me with dependability. I

asked some of my colleagues to review the collected data and the final outcomes of the research. Peer examination complied with the dependability strategy.

My Role as a Researcher

As a qualitative researcher, my role in this particular research was quite central. I served as the main tool of data collection through interviews. I was interacting with the student-participants who shared their experiences with me. Having this in mind I was particularly careful and watched for any potential problems, which could hinder the research process. One of the problems could be that the immigrant students were not fluent in English. First, I was worried that student-participants would not feel comfortable speaking English with me, but then I realized that as I was not a native English speaker either, it could help them to overcome the discomfort. Also, I used technological means (e.g. online translators, online dictionaries, etc.) during interviews in case they had problems understanding certain words or questions.

The second important problem I would like to voice was that I was a representative of a European state (e.g. Armenia) and I was not a Muslim. Students, while discussing their religious, as well as social identities in Europe, sometimes felt some constraints as they spoke about their experiences with their social and religious identities as well as the influence of European educational policy on their integration in front of a European, non-Muslim researcher. To avoid discomfort and make the entire interview process more productive, I let students know as much as possible about me. I talked about my academic and professional experience, as well shared some information on my family background. Also, I let them know that in this particular research I was representing the United States and that I was also a student who was trying to get her

degree in a foreign country. This type of approach made the entire atmosphere friendlier for student-participants.

Ethical Issues

While studying for both my master's and PhD degrees in the United States, I was able to conduct many research works for my classes. Most of the research that I conducted employed qualitative research methodology, and, more specifically, interviews and observations of human subjects. Before initiating my research works, I always sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research was not an exception. I was in direct contact with research participants as I interviewed them. I fully realized that I had to comply with rules set forth by the IRB within the framework of my study. Thus, I informed student-participants that they were being audio-recorded for the research. They also knew that, when feeling uncomfortable, they could choose not to answer my questions. Moreover, I also let them know, that the information shared with me was going to be fully confidential and I was the only person who would have access to that information, as I kept all our interviews, reflections shared by the students in my private computer. Finally, students knew that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they felt that they did not want to continue.

Chapter 4

Individual Cases

Chapter four of my dissertation presents the individual case analysis, which is based on interviews conducted at Yerevan State University in Armenia, University Frankfurt Am Main in Germany, and Science Po University in Menton, France. Nine immigrant students from Muslim backgrounds participated in interviews. The answers of student-participants allowed me to reveal existing challenges. The interviews made it possible for students to voice the issues related to shifts in their identities, integration into their higher educational institutions in particular and wider society in general as well as education policy related problems.

Thus, students discussed the concept of identity as they saw it. Some of the students noticed shifts in their identities, both social and religious, mentioning that those shifts would probably make their integration into their educational institution as well as society smoother. They realized that integration involved many hardships and obstacles, and they also thought that in order to make their new countries their homes they needed to change from within. Despite their perception, several students still tended to preserve their culture, traditions and religion.

All students thought that integration was crucial for them. They talked about the potential obstacles which could hinder their integration. Student-participants mentioned the three particular obstacles that were hindering their integration: religion and ethnicity; language; and unequal treatment by professors.

This discussion made it clear that students found the European policy on higher education both advantageous and disadvantageous. The main advantage, according to the students, was the flexibility of the policy, which allowed them to transfer their credits from one higher educational institution to another. While talking about the problems related to the policy, they mentioned that the existing disadvantages had the potential of hindering their integration into their educational environment and society of their host country. One of the disadvantages most frequently mentioned was the issue of non-participation in the decision-making processes and non-enrollment in student councils of the universities. High tuition fees were a major problem for students studying in Armenia and France.

Below is the discussion of individual cases.

Yerevan State University, Armenia

I conducted the first series of my research interviews in Yerevan, Armenia. To my surprise, there were many immigrant students from Muslim backgrounds who expressed a willingness to participate in interviews. I conducted a group interview first in order to determine which students were willing to volunteer for my research till the end; whether or not there could be some kind of connection and mutual understanding among us (e.g. student participants and I) during the interviews; if students had interesting stories as well as experiences to share with me. After discussing general questions related to my research, I chose three students from the following none Arab countries: Iran, Egypt, and Uzbekistan. All three participants were students at Yerevan State University.

Viola's case study.

Brief overview of identity in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is a former Soviet republic. In 1992, the country gained its

independence from the Soviet Union and adopted its own Constitution. According to the

2013 US State Department Human Rights Report, Uzbekistan is considered to be an

authoritarian state with a constitution that provides for "a presidential system with

separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The

executive branch under President Islam Karimov dominated political life and exercised

nearly complete control over the other branches of government" (p. 6). The State

Department report added that there were many political prisoners who were cruelly

tortured and abused without ever having undergone a fair trial. The country is

fundamentally Muslim, and religious minority groups are not welcome at all.

According to the 2012 Freedom House report, there was no freedom of speech in

the country, the access to mass media was limited, and the internet was fully controlled.

Free movement form one city to another required government permission. The Freedom

House report indicated that,

> A 2011 overhaul of the residency permit system for Tashkent reportedly resulted
>
> in increased denial of services to unregistered residents and their resettlement in
>
> less-developed provincial areas. Restrictions on foreign travel include the use of
>
> exit visas, which are often issued selectively. Despite such controls, millions of
>
> Uzbeks seek employment abroad, particularly in Russia and Kazakhstan. (p.10)
>
> Since the break-up of Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has faced harsh economic

problems, which have resulted in poor living conditions for most of the population.

Corruption was widespread in the country and obstructed equal access to employment and education.

The question of identity in Uzbekistan was also quite complex. According to the 2013 Safari the Globe cultural guide,

> The people of Uzbekistan are struggling to find a unified identity as the people argue how each person should be identified. Many of the ethnic Uzbeks identity as "Uzbeks," which they tend to define in political, cultural, and ethnic terms. This is usually defined by being a Muslim, having a settled lifestyle, speaking Uzbek, and being an ethnic Uzbek. Most ethnic Tajiks in the country identify as Tajiks, but citizens of Uzbekistan. Many other minority groups refuse to be identified as Uzbek, even under political terms; this is in part because the Uzbeks have tied the culture, language, and ethnicity to the Uzbek identity, implying the identity requires more than just citizenship hence excluding these ethnic minorities. Because of this, most ethnic minorities generally identify by their ethnicity, which tends to be tied to a distinct language and culture. (p. 3)

Uzbekistan is a predominantly Muslim country, and in recent years religion has become one of the most important aspects in the country's life. Although during Soviet times strong efforts were made to modernize the country, religion continued to be greatly valued. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan strengthened the foundation of Islamic Identity formation (Yerkesheva, 2004). The formation of Uzbek identity was mostly based on Islam, despite the fact that the Uzbek constitution affirmed the principle of the separation of mosque and state (Sengupta, 2002).

Finally, as in many Muslim countries, women in Uzbekistan were more disadvantaged than men. Women did not have the same access to education as men did. Women frequently had a hard time finding jobs because employers usually preferred men. Women were mostly encouraged to be obedient housewives actively involved in housekeeping as well as raising children. Incidents of domestic violence were many and usually remained unpunished because of existing cultural and religious norms. The 2012 Freedom House reports states: "Victims of domestic violence are discouraged from pressing charges against perpetrators, who rarely face prosecution. The trafficking of women abroad for prostitution remains a serious problem" (p.12).

What brought Viola to Armenia: Changes in identity.

Viola's background.

At the time of the interview, Viola was an MA degree student living in Armenia. She grew up in a middle class community of mostly Uzbek families in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. She mentioned that there were only three Kazakh and five Russian families residing in the same community with her family. During our first meeting, I felt that Viola did not want to talk about her family, because she mentioned that it was hard for her to go back and remember the "tough times and hardships" that she faced during her childhood. Our conversations were general, and we discussed many everyday topics of regular life. I talked about life in Armenia and in the USA. She mostly talked about her life in Armenia, until one day she opened up with, "I think I should share this with you, because I think it is going to be important for your project. And if I share this with you, I will feel relieved, I think."

Viola then shared that her family was a middle class family that did not have any major financial issues in Uzbekistan. Her father was head-of-construction and her mother was a piano teacher at a music school in Tashkent. She had two older brothers and a younger sister. She recalled that the only main value in her family was the following: "My father was the head, and my brothers were important too. My mom, my sisters, and I were not of high importance." Viola mentioned that those values were sometimes painful because her educated mother did not deserve the cruel attitude she received from her father. Viola indicated that her father was religious and that the entire family had to follow all religious traditions.

When talking about her personal identity, Viola indicated that:

My mom had a great influence on the development of my personal identity. She taught me the beautiful, the kind. She taught me that God is important, but to understand God's importance I need to open my heart. My mom was against domestic violence and cruelty. But you know, in Islam women cannot really get divorced. And so my mother stayed and she definitely influenced me a lot. My sister as well…

When discussing the question of having friends other than Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, Viola explained that her father had quite a nationalistic approach and that he did not want "others" to be among the friends of his family members. Thus, Viola's interaction with friends other than Uzbeks was limited to a couple of Kazakhs and Russians. Viola, a very open-minded person, had many friends. She was a student group leader at school and liked to organize field-trips to different sites and other school activities. She said she was

a friendly person and, in Uzbekistan, never had problems integrating into her circle of friends.

Viola stressed that despite the problems that still existed in her country, she loved Uzbekistan. When asked about her nationality, she proudly identified herself as Uzbek.

For me, being Uzbek is a good thing. I grew up there. Yes, my family was not perfect and I had a childhood… I didn't have childhood—it was hard. But yes, I am Uzbek, and I am a proud Uzbek. You know, Uzbek people have a lot of traditions. We generally are happy people. We like to cook great food, we like having guests, we like playing music, we respect our religion. And Uzbekistan is very beautiful. If you see what Uzbeks can make with their hands, you will be surprised. In general, when I say Uzbek, I imagine every positive thing that my country's population can do, and I am trying to be one of them, so that in a big crowd people can point at me and think that I am a good Uzbek.

Despite the fact that Viola loved Uzbekistan, she indicated that there were many problems in her country. She mentioned that the existing laws were violated and that the country's economy had become completely monopolized. Access to online media was limited. The internet, in general, was widely controlled. According to Viola, even cell-phone and land-phone conversations were controlled. She mentioned that sending an email from Uzbekistan to her friend in the United States ended-up with her visiting a police station.

Viola indicated that educational institutions did not welcome female students: "Uzbek education is more for males than females. Females do not really try to become students, because it doesn't make any sense to try. They will fail anyway."

While talking about Uzbekistan, Viola said that religion had become one of the most important aspects of the country's life. She said that in the past women were not required to wear the *hijab*, but that it had become a requirement in certain parts of the country for women to cover their heads and sometimes even their entire faces. Viola mentioned one "huge drawback" about her country: "In the Soviet period, there were many nationalities in Uzbekistan. They would come to our country for different reasons: temporary workers, researchers, musicians, and so on. Now that everything is controlled and different, people try to run away from Uzbekistan."

Viola's perception of her religious and social identity.

Viola explained that religion had played an important role throughout her life. Her father had brought up all of his children to have great respect and love toward religion and God. Viola emphasized the fact of her being a religious person and stressed that she always followed all of their religious traditions and habits: she prayed several times a day, fasted during Ramadan, covered her head when outside, never used alcohol or ate pork, and so on. According to Viola, she grew up reading the Holy Quran. Viola described religion as means of becoming a better person, of purifying oneself from possible sins. She also mentioned that she used to attend all the religious services that she could back in Uzbekistan because she considered them important. She said that when a person attended those service, he or she was closer to God. When asked about practicing Islam in a predominantly Christian country like Armenia, Viola mentioned the following:

I respect any religion. Christians are our brothers. All believers are [our brothers]. We all believe and trust in God. Maybe we all see it differently, but there is only one Allah for all of us. I know it is hard to be Muslim in a Christian country, but I

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don't want to change anything now. I don't know what will happen after, because sometimes I have problems…

For Viola, social identity meant a group of people with whom she could integrate easily and become a part of. She said that the group of people could have the same interests as her, reside in the same community, attend the same school, and so on. When pointing out the difference between social and religious identity, Viola mentioned that:

For me religious identity—or, to be more specific, *my* religious identity—is when I am alone with God and my thoughts. But there can be people who have the same belief as I do and we can share our thoughts on different things. When I talk about religious identity, first of all I think of purity. Social identity is a bit different. When I think of social identity, I think of my friends. Friends are a group of people who can share the same interests with me, listen to same kind of music, like the same movies. And we are all a part of society. But we can also share the same religion.

Viola mentioned that her family influenced the formation of her social identity as well. She told that her mother always wanted to be friends with people who read books, who appreciated music, and who liked art. Viola stressed that because of her communicative and easy-going personality, "which I got from my mother, it was always easy for me to become a part of social groups." Viola mentioned that her communication skills and easy-going personality were the most valuable aspects of her social identity. They helped her easily integrate into society.

Immigration to Armenia and shifts in identity.

Viola immigrated to Armenia in 2007 after her mother's death. She was 25. During our conversation, I found out that Viola's maternal grandparents lived in Armenia

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during the Soviet period, when her grandfather was employed by the Armenian atomic power plant. After Viola's mother passed away, it became very difficult for her to live with her father and two brothers, so Viola and her sister Shahnoza decided to immigrate to Yerevan and live with their grandparents.

The transition was not easy of course. As she recalls:

Everything was different. People were different, the language was different, the habits were different. We went through a kind of cultural-shock. First we even wanted to go back to Uzbekistan. But then we realized that we could not live with our father and brothers. They don't have any respect toward us. They are cruel.

Viola explained that, aside from the fact that her grandparents resided in Armenia, it was also easier to become a legal resident of Armenia compared to other Eastern European states. Moreover, she did not have to bother about buying or renting an apartment because their grandparents already had everything ready for them. Viola explained that their life conditions in Armenia were not the best, saying, "Most people in Armenia are financially not very well-off. My grandparents had their monthly pension. As soon as we arrived, I found a job in a café as a waitress so that we could make ends meet."

Viola's adaptation process was not easy. She considered the language to be a huge obstacle despite the fact that she could speak Russian. Another obstacle was her appearance: "Everyone could tell I was not local and people would look at me strangely. Everyone thought we were from China." Another important thing was that she covered her head when outside, and she thought that the locals did not like it.

One day a man approached me and he told me that only Turkish people cover their heads. I know Armenia has problems with Turkey, but Turks are not the only Muslims in the world. Being a Muslim does not mean being a bad person. I think that there are people who have a lot of prejudice toward Muslims. They don't try to know us. They assume the most negative things before they even try to talk to us. But not all people are like that. I have met a lot of people who have been very kind and supportive toward us.

Viola decided to continue her education in Armenia and apply for a Master's degree in economics. The application process was not hard for her at all. She even was successful in finding an international scholarship which could pay for her studies. The difficulties started when she entered the University. Viola said that the locals did not accept her. She could not make any friends. She attended the class of Russian-speaking students, where most of students were Armenians from Russia, and they were not friendly at all.

I tried to talk to people, but they did not pay attention. They wore expensive clothing, and their hair was always done beautifully… I could not afford it. Besides, I covered my head. So none of them was interested in becoming my friend. Some professors were fine, but the students were not supportive at all. They did not even look my way.

Viola mentioned that, after 7 years of living in Armenia, she felt like a different person. A once open-minded and communicative person, she had come to see herself as discrete and isolated. She mentioned that, although after 3 years of life in Armenia she

had found some four Armenian friends, her social life could not be compared to that in Uzbekistan:

> I rarely go out. My grandparents are old. I have to study hard in order not to lose my scholarship and in-between university and home I work as a waitress. My friends are good, but they have their own friends. That's where my communication gets harder with them. They all know I am from Uzbekistan. I never hide my nationality, and I think they don't like it. Besides, I still can't speak Armenian well enough. I understand everything, but it's hard to speak. Most of the time we speak Russian at home with my grandparents and with my friends as well. It is just some people here don't like to speak Russian. So, I think my social identity has changed to being more isolated from the society. Integration is not that easy. I will have to give up a lot of things to be a little bit more integrated. But I can't give up those things. They have value.

One of the things that Viola thought she would have to give up in order to be more integrated was her religion. She explained that the only place she could practice her religious duties, like praying, for example, was at home. She also complained that she could not find specialized stores where she could buy *halal* meat, meat that is permissible by Islamic law, unlike pork. Importantly, Viola stopped covering her head in order to avoid "cynical questions" from her classmates. She did not consider herself a full member of Armenian society, and she did not think of herself as European because:

> Being European is different. I mentioned before that I have had to give up many things to become European. I have already given up most of my social identity. I don't communicate as I used to. And I have already given up part of my religious

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identity. I don't cover my head, and I don't go to Mosque every Friday as I used to do back in Tashkent. I have given up a lot and think there is much more ahead that I might give up for the sake of being a little bit more integrated. You see…

Viola's experiences with European education.

Viola at Yerevan State University.

At the time of the interview, Viola was a Master's degree student at Yerevan State University (YSU). She studied at the faculty of Economics. Her first degree had been in math, which she received in Tashkent. Viola said that it was important for her to continue her education because she wanted to advance in her future career. She chose Economics because "with the degree in Economics I will have an improved chance at finding a better job, and I will have more opportunities to receive a better salary." She also indicated that with the economic problems facing Armenia, she had all chances of advancement in her professional career. The Master's degree program lasts two years, and it was Viola's first year in the program. She attended evening classes with a group of Russian-speaking students (90% of the students were of Armenian descent and a couple of students were from India) because she was not fluent in Armenian yet. Viola mentioned that the program was not easy because it was something new for her. When I asked Viola about the attitude of her professors toward her she explained that:

> All of my professors are Armenians. We have both seminars and lectures. And I told you that most of the students are Russian speaking local Armenians who attended schools in Russia and have problems speaking Armenian. There are three or four professors that I don't want to approach. I feel like those professors treat me and the other students from India as outsiders. I tried to ask them questions a

couple of times but never got a response, so I stopped. But those professors do answer questions that the Armenian students ask, and they seem to be really helpful toward them. But I also have professors who are very helpful. I can even call them on their mobile phones to ask them any questions. I know they will help.

Viola mentioned that, at the very beginning of her classes, all her professors as well as peers would ask her about her nationality, religion, and ethnicity. She used to cover her head when she started attending the University. As time passed, she felt peer-pressure because other students would look at her and ask teasing questions about her clothing. Viola stopped covering her head. Her circle of friends at YSU was limited to two students from India, because "Armenian students are in their own group, and there is a tradition among some Armenian students to call Uzbeks stupid people. So they have always kept their distance."

For Viola, being integrated meant not feeling like an outsider. She did not consider herself a fully integrated person in the educational environment of her institution. She thought that being integrated into the educational environment would be very beneficial for her because it would allow her to participate more in class discussions, share her thoughts with all her professors and peers, and support others and get support from others if needed. Some of the obstacles Viola saw on her way to integration into her educational environment included: language, nationality, ethnicity, religion, the status of being an "outsider." Viola did not feel that her institutional environment was supportive enough in helping her better integrate:

I think if all the professors were supportive toward me, other students would feel that support as well and would have a different kind of attitude. They would be friendly, and they would get to know me better. But they think I am a Muslim Uzbek, and they don't take me seriously. I always feel that distance, and sometimes that distance tortures me. So I think that our institution could organize some cultural classes where the immigrants or foreigners could present their cultures. I have heard that in the United States it is frequently done, and it makes the integration easier. Here, at YSU, I have never heard of anyone organizing this type of things. I also think that team-work would help. Here we do not do any team projects. We just do our own work separately. As a result, others do not get the opportunity to know me better.

Viola explained that her "partial" integration into her university environment also hindered her integration into Armenian society. She said that if she had Armenian friends at YSU, she could go out with them after classes, get to know other people, and go to clubs and concerts. Viola said that the university directly influenced her integration into society.

My university does not create any possibilities for me to integrate. If I do not get integrated inside YSU, it will be harder to get integrated outside, because there are many different people. I do have some Armenian friends, 3 of them, they work with me in the same café. But we always are tired after work, so we go home. Also, I mentioned about the students from India. Both of them are Muslims, so we just talk and share some class work. We went out a couple of times, but it was just the three of us. My grandparents have a lot of Armenian

friends, though. Their integration was easier because it took place during Soviet times, and it was kind of the same country. People didn't care then.

Viola said that her educational environment needed to be more supportive of her integration into society, it needed to create a student community where all students could interact. It needed to open recreational facilities where students could gather and get to know more about one another. Viola also mentioned the important role of professors, emphasizing that all professors needed to be tolerant toward other nationalities. Another thing Viola thought important was having diverse cultural clubs that would allow students to learn about other cultures and religions:

> I think that the cultural clubs would be able to instill values of respect toward other cultures and traditions. Also, there are student unions where only local students are involved. Those unions allow students to take an active part in the decision making process related to our education. It would be good if students of other nationalities, too, were involved in those unions, so that we could participate in decision making as well.

Viola's perception of higher education in Europe.

When discussing issues related to Armenian higher-education policy, Viola told that she had heard about the changes that the policy underwent and is still undergoing. Viola indicated that she had a general idea about the Bologna Process through several seminars conducted by experts from Europe for students of higher education all over Armenia.

For Viola, the Bologna Process had both negative and positive aspects:

The positive thing about the process is that I can choose the subjects I am interested in. When I was a student in Uzbekistan, it was the 5-year program. All of the subjects were compulsory, so we did not have a choice but to attend all the classes. As a result, we developed a general idea about many different things. We did not really master the subjects we were interested in.

For Viola, the negative aspect of the Bologna Process was the cost of education. She said that for many students education was expensive, and not all students could afford to pay for it. Viola also mentioned the "integrative" aspect of the Bologna Process. She said the Bologna Process theoretically involved all students in the decision making process, but in reality many students were left out from that process:

The university officials decide which students can be involved in decision making, and I think they choose students who will do whatever they tell them to do. I feel like it is corrupt, not the Bologna Process, but the university system. Another thing is that university officials will never choose an immigrant student, I think. I have not heard of any immigrant student participating in university affairs. Only local Armenian students participate.

According to Viola another negative aspect of policy was that it did not really promote an integrative educational environment. She explained that many professors were not ready for the Bologna Process because they had not had the training that would allow them to understand the process better. Viola mentioned that there were many professors who continued to lecture on subjects using the old-fashioned paradigm, which had nothing to do with the Bologna Process.

Those professors hinder my whole integration process. They do not want to understand that there can be multicultural classrooms. They do not want to understand that students can participate in discussions and ask questions. They like to do the old-style lecturing, and I don't like it, because it reminds me of the old Soviet school system that I never liked. When I ask them questions, sometimes they are really rude and might even shout. But, as I told, there are many professors who are really supportive. They are younger and got their degrees abroad, in the United States for example. So they can understand multiculturalism in the classroom. But there are not many young professors, unfortunately. So if we are talking about the higher educational policy and the environment that it creates, I think that policy makers should take care of the institutions staff, make it more in tune with the policy. And it is not the only thing.

When discussing the techniques which were used to promote integration, Viola mentioned the existence of student clubs that all students could attend. She added, however, that a very small number of students knew about those clubs because they were not well advertised. Viola talked about several aspects of higher-education policy and practice that she would change to make her integration better. Included among those aspects were the following: a more student-oriented way of teaching; the possibility for all students to vote on different issues if there was a need for it; the active participation of all students in representing their faculties and departments; and the establishment at Yerevan State University of a proper international students' office, where students with international backgrounds could interact with one another and locals.

Overall Viola thought that education was accessible to her: "As long as you pay, you remain enrolled. But the payment is too high, and for many students who have no scholarships education is out of reach."

Viola also considered it important to mention her personal feelings about her institution's environment. She said she felt accepted neither by local students nor most of her professors. She indicated that the feeling of being an "other" never left her while in her own institution. "That Uzbek lady," as a reference to her, was what had become very common for her to hear, not only from her peers but also from her professors.

There are even times when they don't call my name. They just call out, "Hey, Uzbek!" But I am not offended. I am proud that I am Uzbek, but they think it is something really bad to have as my nationality. Maybe the reason is that they have no idea about my culture and how my people are. I hope this will change as time goes by, but I don't know how fast it will change. I think that their attitude toward me makes it really difficult for me to integrate. The only offensive thing I would mention is that it is not just the students, but the professors also call me "Uzbek," and I always thought that professors are educated. Maybe it is because of my religion or that my facial features are different. I don't know.

At the end of our conversation, Viola asked me whether or not it was easy for me to integrate in to American Society. I realized that I have never thought about that, maybe because I have never considered that I could be not integrated.

Interpreting Viola's data.

Viola's data suggested, first of all, that she had a very tough childhood. During the interview, she did not talk about the cases of domestic violence in her own family, but

it was an issue that I heard her sounding out several times as a general problem existing in Uzbekistan.

Viola's data showed that her parents influenced the development of her religious identity by teaching her the traditions of Islam, making her read the Quran and follow the female dress code, and so on. She grew up as a religious person. Her story about her childhood and her strict father informed me that she tried to find some kind of escape through religion and was in search of solutions to her family problems. That was likely why Viola put so much stock in her religious identity. She saw religious identity as being alone with oneself and God, but she continued to think that she can share her religious thoughts with her coreligionists. Viola's religious identity was undergoing changes in Armenia. She could sense those changes, and it appeared she was trying to hold on to her religious values while limiting their scope by giving up just some of the religious habits and traditions.

It was evident that Viola's mother had an influence on the development of her social identity. Viola indicated that she had a lot of friends and did not have any problems socially integrating, but at the same time her interaction was limited to people of the same interests (such as books, music, movies, and so on). Those limitations in her interaction with other members of society made it hard to judge how communicative Viola was and whether or not it had been easy for her to integrate. Viola's story showed that she was not used to being a part of a multicultural society because as a child she was encouraged to make friends mostly with Uzbek children.

The reasons behind Viola's move to Armenia were directly related to her family and, more specifically, to her father. What seemed evident to me in Viola's story was that

she did not face particularly harsh conditions as an immigrant because she already had a family in Armenia. Neither did she appear to have had any major problems finding a job as a waitress. It was obvious, however, that Viola experienced culture-shock stemming from such circumstances as a lack of knowledge of the Armenian language, religion, culture, traditions, and so on.

I can assume that Viola was a hard working person because she decided to continue her education as she realized that it could help her advance her professional career. Another thing I should indicate is that Viola did not seem to have many problems finding a scholarship, which allowed her to pay her tuition and other school related costs. Viola neither complained about her grades, tests or examinations.

Based on the data provided Viola did have problems related to integration not only into her institutional environment but also into Armenian society. She did feel that in often cases she was rejected by her peer students as well as professors. Besides factors like her religion, ethnicity, culture she thought that higher education policy hindered her integration into her institutional environment in particular and Armenian society in general because it did not really encourage the creation of opportunities (e.g. student clubs, team projects, classes about different cultures, etc.), which would promote the integration of immigrant students like Viola. Another important aspect was that there were still old Soviet school professors who used outdated teaching methods and who were not used to teaching multi-cultural classrooms.

Viola thought that the solution to her problems related to integration could be found in changing her religious views as well as approaching Armenian society in a more Europeanized manner. Her story did not show that at that point of time she was ready to

do it. But her story did show that she had undergone changes in her religious as well as social identity after migration to Armenia. Her data also revealed that the educational environment in Armenia was not organized in a manner which would promote the integration of not only Armenian students but also of students from various ethnic as well as religious backgrounds.

Finally, Viola's story made it obvious that the Bologna Process had been only partially implemented in Armenian higher education, which was expected to implement the three cycle system and also give students the opportunity to choose. However, the policy did not involve all students in decision making processes; it did not organize trainings for the older generation of professors; and it lacked student-oriented teaching methods.

Ahmed's case study.

Brief overview of Egypt.

In talking about transition in Egypt, it would be meaningful to talk about major political changes as well, which was already on the doorstep of Egypt in 1952, when the Egyptian constitutional monarchy as well as aristocracy were abolished. Demonstrations and meetings flourished in the country. Different organizations like the "Free Officers" began to encourage the population to take an active part in the demonstrations against the King. According to Gasparyan (2002), people did not know what to expect, and neither did they realize that by participating in those meetings they were completely and fundamentally changing their future.

Finally, on the night of July 22, 1952 a group of disillusioned military officers rose up in arms against the government. They gained what they wanted by seizing control of the country's key institutions (Gasparyan, 2002, p.87).

According to Gasparyan (2002) from this point, Egypt closed the page of its more or less democratic history and tried to start a new life facing new values and even a new illiterate population from the different suburbs of the country. A new name appeared on the pages of the books of Egyptian history: Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser headed a new regime that swept the country.

Nasser was very popular with his program of reforms that were aimed at reforming social conditions for the poor of countryside. His reforms, however, actually resulted in the beginning of rural inequality. He created a new wealthy class of peasants who began to monopolize economic and political power.

Mubarak's Regime was the logical continuation of Nasser's Regime. Thus, most of the educated people left Cairo seeking a better life in the suburbs or even in other countries, in order to be far away from the newcomers, peasants, and illiterate society of New Egypt (Jabbour, 1993). Thus autocracy went hand in hand with state reform. Nasser and his immediate predecessors were open to European ideas, bringing in strains of European political and social thought such as secular liberalism, fascism, and communism (Vatikiotis, 1980).

As Ortuño (2004) indicated, modern state reform pushed Islam further into the background as the major organizing principle of state administration and, later, political life. This led to a period of transition during which Egyptians became exposed to all the dislocating and anxiety-producing effects of the impact of Western influence. Despite

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forty years of British occupation and administrative reform (1882-1922), it was apparent that the outside power did not create the pre-conditions for a new political order on their own model. The commonly held belief that national independence was essential to the introduction of democratic government and institutions has never been justified.

> Instead, the major consequence of national emancipation has been social and political repression at its worst. At best, it has reasserted the legacy of the old: centralism in government and, with it, even greater state power. (Ortuño, 2004, p. 23).

As in any Islamic country, the question of identity has always been quite complex in Egypt. The majority of population is Muslim, but there are many Copts (Oriental Orthodox Christians) that reside in Egypt. It is difficult to define Egyptian identity because the culture is embroiled in the struggle between traditions and modernity (Taha, Nassar, & Tawfic, 2011). Thus according to the research on Egyptian identity carried out by Taha et al. (2011), Egyptians' approach toward their identity varied greatly. Some Egyptians considered themselves just humans, others saw their identity as directly related to Islam and the Arabic language. There are even people who saw Egyptian as being merely a nationality and nothing more. Taha et al. (2011) concluded that, in spite of the fact that the opinions of Egyptians varied with regard to their identity, most of them linked their personal and social identity to Islam.

What brought Ahmed to Armenia: Changes in identity.

Ahmed's background.

At the time of the interview, Ahmed was a bachelor's degree student at Yerevan State University. He grew up in a middle class family in Cairo, the capital city of Egypt.

According to Ahmed, both of his parents were university professors: his father taught world history at Cairo University and his mother was a professor of English at the American University of Cairo. Ahmed and his family never experienced economic hardship while in Egypt. Ahmed told in our interview, "When I was growing up I never struggled. I never saw my parents having any financial difficulties. There were three children in our family including me, and we always had whatever we needed or wanted."

As Ahmed's parents' direct affiliation with the universities suggested, education was highly valued in his family. Another important thing was religion. Ahmed indicated:

My parents were and still are religious. When we were younger my parents taught us all the details about Islam. Very often my mom would read us Quran in the evenings. My parents thought that being connected with God could make us better people, and our attitude toward other people would be better too. So, yes, I grew up in a religious family, but we are not fanatical. There are a lot of people in Egypt that pray all the time and knock their heads on the ground, as a sign of respect to God. Well, my family never does it, and neither do I. I believe in God and I know I am Muslim, that's what my parents taught me.

Ahmed indicated that he always followed religious traditions, because "if you consider yourself a religious person, you need to know and follow the traditions."

When I asked Ahmed to identify himself, he told me: "I am Egyptian, I am Muslim, and my language is Arabic, but I also speak English and Armenian." Ahmed indicated that he was proud to be Egyptian. As he explained, Egypt was one of ancient countries in the world and millions of people visited Egypt because Egyptian culture had always been different and alluring.

Ahmed mentioned that, while in Cairo, he lived in Dokki. Dokki was one of the districts where people of different nationalities as well as religions resided. Most Dokki residents were middle class. Ahmed indicated that it was beneficial for him to grow up in Dokki because he could make friends with people from different countries and from various religious backgrounds. He said that his parents encouraged his interaction with children from different backgrounds:

I think because my parents were educated, they knew that it is important to interact with different cultures because it plays a great role in how one sees the world. Also, there were always a lot of visitors in Egypt. They came to work or they came as tourists, for different reasons. So it was interesting to make friends with those people and make connections and show them Egypt. I think I am lucky I could make friends with different nationalities. In general, when I talk about Egypt, I always think that there are people of many cultures and religions. And it is a good thing. I am not saying it is like in the United States, but it is similar.

Despite the fact that many aspects of economic, political, as well as religious life were worsening in his youth, Ahmed loved his country and his culture. He mentioned that he had many friends in Cairo. As a child, Ahmed attended an international school where not many Egyptians studied, so he could make friends not only with Egyptians but also with foreign children. According to Ahmed it had never been hard for him to make friends and integrate:

I don't recall any hardships or problems related to my finding friends or integrating socially. I was from Egypt, so I did not have major issues making Egyptian friends. International children were interested in having Egyptian

friends. We all could speak English and could understand one another. We even

had many interests in common. I think I had a happy childhood and adolescence.

Ahmed's perception of his religious and social identity.

Ahmed said that his family was Muslim and that they were familiar with the

Quran. Ahmed and his family followed the traditions of the Islamic faith. Ahmed said:

I do consider myself a religious person. But I have to confess that I am not a

frequent visitor of the Mosque. It has always been between God and me. I know

how to pray, and I think I understand what faith in God is. But there are many

people in Egypt that see it differently. They think praying several times a day

makes them more religious. I just would say that I believe in God, but my

religious practices have certain limits. For me, a religious identity is a question of

what religion I belong to. I belong to Islam, but it does not mean that people from

other religious backgrounds are wrong. In all honesty, religion sometimes sounds

like a tag to me. Sometimes I don't understand people who pay so much attention

to that tag. We are all humans, and we are all equal for God.

Ahmed indicated that being an Armenian citizen and at the same time being

Muslim did not bother him at all. He knew that Armenia is a Christian country. He had a

good knowledge of Armenian history, and he was perfectly aware that Armenia was the

first country in the world to adopt Christianity as a national religion. He mentioned that

he was able to pray and continue being a Muslim while residing in a Christian country.

For Ahmed, religion itself was not the most important thing in life. He indicated that he

and his family never used religious signs to highlight their Muslim background. They

were not outwardly religious even in Cairo:

For example, my mother never covered her head. *Hijab* was not important. We should not mix religion with what we wear or do, I think. And God should always be in our hearts. There are a lot of women who wear *hijab*, but they are so ungodly that even *hijab* does not make them religious. And I can tell the same thing about men who pray as many times as possible during a day.

Ahmed defined social identity as a group of people that have a lot in common with one another. He mentioned that he could not interact with the whole of society even if he wanted to; consequently, his social identity was limited to his friends, relatives, community members and, as he indicated: "People, who are around me." Ahmed made it clear that for him social identity was different from religious identity. He considered religious identity closer to personal identity because, as he mentioned, religion was something very personal for him. Ahmed said that his parents have greatly influenced the development of his social identity:

My schooling started at my home. I am thankful to my parents for everything I have become and I am. They influenced the formation of any type of identity you can find in me. They taught me what faith is. They made me realize that there are different cultures in the world and that in reality it is a good thing to live in a multicultural society. It is thanks to them that I was able to make many foreign friends. I learned a lot from my friends also, and they of course have influenced the formation of my social identity.

Ahmed considered the most important aspect of his social identity to be his usefulness to society, how helpful he was to his friends and community members. He mentioned that as a child he would help his neighbors, shop for elderly people who

resided in his community, help his foreign friends if they had any problems at school, and so on. Ahmed said, "Don't expect society to accept you, if you are not useful for it. Only usefulness allows you to be a part of the society in the country where you live."

Immigration to Armenia and shifts in identity.

Ahmed and his family immigrated to Armenia in 2011. The main reason for their immigration was the harsh political situation in Egypt. Ahmed indicated that, back in Cairo, his parents were good friends with a family from Armenian descent. As soon as the political situation worsened, the Armenian family immigrated to Armenia. Ahmed's family decided to follow their example and headed to Yerevan. Ahmed was 21 years old. Ahmed explained that the transition was difficult for him:

We never thought of immigration. But here we are in Armenia for already 4 years.

It was not easy. The culture, the language, the city, the climate, everything was

different. But I realized that I had to get used to it. And I tried my best.

When I asked Ahmed whether or not the locals were supportive, he mentioned that Armenians seemed to be very friendly. His family got to know various Armenian families in their apartment building. According to Ahmed, some of the Armenian families were supportive. There were also some families that had prejudices towards Ahmed's family. Several times Ahmed heard some of the neighbors saying that Arabs were dangerous terrorists.

Ahmed's family faced many hardships. According to Ahmed, Armenia was expensive compared to Egypt. His parents did not have jobs. The only positive thing was that they had the support of their friends. Also, it was not hard to become a citizen of Armenia. When they arrived in Armenia, they rented a small apartment in the suburbs of

Yerevan. The conditions were not bad. The hardest part was finding a job. Ahmed indicated that:

> For our parents, we were the priority. They wanted to find a job as soon as they
> could so that we could continue our education. But, you know, it is not an easy
> thing to find a job in Armenia. My father applied to several university positions
> many times with no luck. At last, my mother realized that she could apply for a
> job at the American University of Armenia. And it was a success. She was
> accepted. My father also found a position as a lecturer of Arabic in the Armenian-
> Russian University. I think that the country accepted my parents.

After Ahmed's parents found jobs, Ahmed decided to continue his education. Ahmed was a history major back in Egypt, so he wanted to continue his studies at the Faculty of History at Yerevan State University. There was only one problem. He could not transfer his credits, so he had to start over. Another important thing that Ahmed mentioned was that the Faculty of History did not offer courses for students who did not speak Armenian, which meant that he had to learn Armenian.

Ahmed did not undergo major changes in his religious identity. As he had indicated, his family was religious, but religion was not the guiding aspect of their lives. Consequently, even after immigrating and residing in Armenia, Ahmed's point of view on religion did not change:

> The only thing I think has changed is that I almost don't pray, but I still believe in
> God. I don't think, though, that I am not praying because I immigrated to a
> Christian country. It has nothing to do with it. I am not praying because I was not

praying so much in Egypt either. It is just about how I see things, not how

Armenia has influenced me.

Regarding his social identity, he indicated that his thinking had changed. He had started to see things differently.

I discovered for myself that people can be free in their decisions. They can act the way they want within certain limits. They can wear whatever they want, and no one is going to call them "Haram" or something like that. And I like the way things are here. I feel like I am free to make choices. And sometimes I catch myself thinking the way Armenians would think about different aspects of life.

Ahmed indicated that being a part of Egyptian society was quite different from being a member of Armenian society. He said that as a member of Armenian society, he could make a lot of choices, while in Egypt his choices were limited. So he thought of Armenia as more of a democratic state compared to Egypt. Ahmed mentioned that, in his opinion, rising fundamentalist Islamic values were the main causes which limited the choices of Egyptian society.

In Egypt people read Quran, but they also read Shariat (e.g. Sharia law is an Islamic law and a part of religious tradition), which is quite different from Quran. I don't think Shariat teaches how to be a good person. I think it brainwashes people. I think it is a good tool for any government of an Islamic country to create a zombie society. I am not saying that Armenian government is perfect; it is not perfect at all. But when I make a comparison freedom-wise, I have more choices here than in Egypt, and I like it.

As I have indicated, Ahmed was able to become fluent in Armenian. He told me that he preferred to speak Armenian because it helped him practice and master the language and because it facilitated his integration into Armenian Society.

No matter what language I speak, I never hide my nationality or religion. I am really proud to be Egyptian and Muslim. I reside in a Christian community, and all our neighbors know that we are Muslim. Some of them don't like us and we know it. But there are some neighbors that come to our apartment for coffee. They even might leave the keys with us and ask us to watch their apartment while they are gone for vacation. I think that it is an indicator that they trust us, and I feel happy about it.

When we spoke about Ahmed's family practicing Egyptian traditions in Armenia, Ahmed mentioned that his parents cooked Egyptian food, organized parties, and invited Armenian friends to celebrate Egyptian national holidays.

Ahmed mentioned that he had made many Armenian friends while in Armenia. He thought of Armenians as very loyal and devoted. Ahmed emphasized that his friends had made his integration into Armenian society easier and helped him become a lawful member of Armenian society. However, even though Ahmed saw himself as quite integrated into Armenian society, he still did not consider himself European:

I was born in Egypt; I grew up in Egypt; my native language is Arabic, and I am Muslim. I don't think that any of the mentioned characteristic features describes a European. Also, I doubt that I want to give up my true identity and pretend that I am European. If society is to accept me, it will accept me for who and what I am. If not…but I think society does accept me (smiling).

Ahmed's experiences with European education.

Ahmed at Yerevan State University.

At the time of the interview, Ahmed was a first year students at the Faculty of History at Yerevan State University. More specifically, he was very much interested in Armenian history. According to Ahmed, students of history department should at least have a general idea about Armenian history because Armenian civilization is one of the ancient civilizations of the world. In addition, Ahmed indicated that:

> The choice of my narrow specialization was based on my interest in the problems and issues related to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Armenians were massacred by the Turks, who are Muslims. For many people, it sounds strange that a Muslim student is interested in the Armenian Genocide. For me it is normal: I am a citizen of Armenia, I speak Armenian, I get to know Armenian culture, and I think that to understand Armenia and Armenians better, I need to know Armenian history. Otherwise it will be hard to be accepted by Armenians. I think my education will be helpful in my future career, because I am planning to work as a researcher, and my dream is to understand and reveal the real reasons of the Genocide of 1915.

Ahmed's thoughts on Yerevan State University were quite distinct. He enjoyed being a student there, because, as he mentioned, he had many Armenian friends. Also, Ahmed said that because he attended classes with the mainstream student population, his Armenian had gotten better. When we discussed Ahmed's professors, he stressed that he often had a hard time with them. The main reason, according to Ahmed, was that the professors could not fully accept him. Some professors refused to understand that an

immigrant could attend the same classes as local Armenian students, and other professors

could not accept the fact that a Muslim student could be interested in Armenian history.

> There were cases when I raised my hand to ask a question, and my professor did
>
> not pay any attention. When I approached him after the class, he refused to
>
> answer again, saying that he does not like people with a Muslim background
>
> because Muslims are potential killers. It was offensive, but my friends advised me
>
> not to pay attention. So I guess now I don't pay attention any more.

Ahmed also indicated that he felt like professors treated him differently. He said

that the different treatment was especially obvious during the student presentations,

which almost always resulted in him scoring very low. Ahmed pointed out that professors

had made fun of his Armenian accent:

> One of my professors said that I should not be with this group of students because
>
> my Armenian is funny. He said I should attend special classes which are designed
>
> for foreign students. Another thing I think you must know is that when we write
>
> essays, local students, no matter how they write, always get the higher scores. But
>
> when I compare my work with the ones that friends have written, it is the same or
>
> sometimes even better. I have always been good in writing. There are a couple of
>
> professors that really like me. For example my professor of English and the
>
> professor of Arabic as a second foreign language. My professor of Arabic is an
>
> Armenian from Lebanon, and he always asks me to help others with Arabic, and I
>
> do.

When I asked Ahmed what he thought about integration, he explained:

I came to this country with no idea what it was like and how it would be. After a month of being here, I understood that, if I want to be a part of the society, I need to accept the cultural game. So for me being integrated means accepting the society however it is. I realized I needed to learn Armenian, and I needed to interact with Armenians as much as I could. I needed to be, myself, a person who knows what Armenia is and who Armenians are. I think that's what integration is.

Ahmed said that his integration into his own educational institution was very important for him because without being integrated he could not study there. He explained that, despite the fact that many professors did not accept him, he had tried his best to keep up with his studies. He mentioned that he was trying to deal with the barriers that could potentially hinder his integration:

> There are many potential barriers that can hinder my integration. For example, the negative attitude of my professors can potentially harm almost anything. But I am trying to ignore that and study hard to prove to my professors that an immigrant with a Muslim background can overcome any difficulty. Immigrant or Muslim is not a tag. It is just how I was born and it is not a mental disability. There are many Armenian students in my own group that still keep a distance and try not to interact with me. And I blame my professors for that. But as I told you the professor of Arabic language includes me a lot, so that I can make more friends, so that other students get the chance to know who I really am. I do have Armenian friends. I am integrated compared with other immigrant students, but I am not fully accepted and it has to do with the environment that my professors create.

Ahmed could not specify an exact solution for the problems related to the attitude of his professors. He indicated that the main way for those problems to be solved was to let time pass, so that his professors would get to know him better.

Ahmed was of the opinion that integration into his educational environment did not influence his integration into European society. Ahmed mentioned that despite the fact that he had many Armenian friends that he went out with, he did not really feel comfortable interacting with people outside his institution. He said that his discomfort was mostly because of the negative attitude of his professors. He mentioned that he felt unsure of how unfamiliar people outside of his institution—in cafes, pubs, clubs and so on—would react to his nationality and especially his religion.

> When I think of the attitude of my professors, sometimes I am not sure how other Armenians will treat me if I tell them that I am from Egypt and I am Muslim. See, the professors can create some mental barriers, which can be harmful for my integration into European society. But, as I said, I am trying not to care. I have some Muslim friends here from Syria and Iran, but the strange thing is that I mostly hang out with Armenian friends. I think it is because I am trying to make sure that my professors' attitude does not bother me or does not hinder my integration outside my institution.

Ahmed's perception of higher education in Europe.

Ahmed's thoughts about higher-education policy in Armenia varied. Though he found higher-education policy in Armenia more democratic compared with that of Egypt, he also mentioned several issues that he thought could be changed to make higher education serve the needs of the students better. Ahmed had a general idea about the

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Bologna Process because, like Viola, he had participated in discussions related to the policy held at Yerevan State University. He was of the opinion that Armenia was not ready to implement the Bologna Process because "it is too expensive for Armenia." Ahmed indicated that he was happy that he could choose his subjects according to the field of his interest.

> Another thing that is very positive about Bologna Process is that I can transfer my credits to any European University of my choice. I am planning to continue my studies for a Master's degree in France, and Bologna allows me to transfer my credits, and my diploma also will be accepted in France. This means that I don't have to take the same subjects again and again. It is very positive and it saves me money as well.

> Ahmed indicated that the tuition fee was very high and that his parents were paying lots of money for his studies. Another problem that he noticed was that the scholarship system was not developed well enough, so that students could find scholarships to cover their tuition. Ahmed did not think that the Bologna Process was promoting his integration into his educational environment and into Armenian society in general.

> I think that this policy is not implemented correctly in Armenia. I don't think that, as a student, I am one of the decision makers at Yerevan State University. There is a student body, with its leaders, who were selected by the University officials. Meanwhile the Bologna Declaration indicates that all students should be actively involved in decision making.

Another thing that seemed to be bothersome for Ahmed was his professors, who, according to Ahmed, were trying to hinder his integration into YSU environment. Ahmed mentioned that professors should be trained well to be able to become part of the Bologna Process. Ahmed told that his professors seemed not to have any idea about how to teach in a multicultural classroom. According to Ahmed, professors would always try to involve more Armenian students into class discussions than immigrant students.

> I think it would be beneficial for me as well as students like me to first of all make the focus of Yerevan State University more international. If the University implements the Bologna Process, every single professor here should understand that they are going to teach in a classroom where there can be many international or immigrant students. So they should try to treat everyone equally. Otherwise, there is no sense in implementing this policy in Armenia.

Ahmed also indicated that he noticed several problems related to access to education. While at Yerevan State University, Ahmed could not easily use computer labs. He found the whole library system quite old-fashioned. Those were issues that he thought could potentially hinder general access to education.

> The debilitated state of the entire library as well as computer lab systems is a huge obstacle for Yerevan State University, which does not allow the student-researchers to conduct research or exchange knowledge with students from other universities all over Europe.

Ahmed did not find that his institution used special techniques that would promote his integration. On the contrary, he thought that Yerevan State University was entirely lacking in those techniques. To explain his answer, Ahmed pointed out that he

did not see any student clubs around the University. What he saw was that students neither conducted team projects nor were involved in community work. Ahmed, like Viola, said that there was no proper international student office that could organize events for students, help them meet, interact and become friends.

When I asked Ahmed about the messages he received from professors or local students he mentioned the following:

I feel like most of the professors don't accept me as I am. They don't want to understand that a Muslim can be interested in Armenian History. And it is not the only problem: the problem is that they don't accept Muslims in general. My professor of Arabic language understands my feelings. He is an Armenian but he is an immigrant, so he knows how it feels. And he tries to help me to be more integrated. He tries to help me make friends with Armenian students, and he is very successful at it. As to local Armenian students, mostly, I think, I am accepted because I have many Armenian friends, and they don't seem to treat me bad or something. It is just the attitude of my professors that really scares me to the point that sometimes I think that I am not rejected just by my professors. I am rejected by many people around this country. This is what bothers me a lot. I am trying to reject those messages from my professors. Sometimes I don't pay attention, but deep in my heart I am scared.

At the end of our conversation Ahmed asked me how I would treat him if I were his professor. I explained to him that I would treat him the same as other students in my class, as all students would be equal for me. Ahmed seemed to be happy to know my point of view.

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Interpreting Ahmed's data.

Ahmed's data shows that Ahmed grew up in a middle class educated family, which valued education a lot. In general, the Egyptian population could not be considered rich, but Ahmed did not grow up facing a lot of financial problems or deprivations. His family was always in a good financial standing. Ahmed's family was religious, and there were certain traditions that they followed, but according to his data, his family had never been involved in fundamental religious practices. Ahmed's data showed that his family never used outward religious signs to highlight their religious belonging, because they did not feel that showing off one's faith makes one more religious.

 I had the impression that Ahmed was really proud to be from Egypt. He was not shy of his religion, and he loved the fact that he was multilingual (with knowledge of Arabic, English and Armenian). Ahmed talked of his culture and Egypt with great respect. During our conversations, it seemed to me that he was upset that the changing political situation in the country had caused his family to immigrate. Ahmed's data revealed a respect toward other cultures because as a child he attended a multicultural school and had many friends from different countries.

The impact of his parents on the development of Ahmed's social and religious identity was obvious. His parents encouraged his friendship with children from other cultural and religious backgrounds and greatly valued knowledge of foreign languages. The data provided by Ahmed also suggested that his parents encouraged at least some general knowledge of Islam and its traditions.

Ahmed saw social identity as being a member of a society who was capable of doing something useful for that society. According to Ahmed's data, as a child he was very active in community work and was a helpful student at school.

Ahmed's data suggested that he was a communicative person. As a child in Cairo, he had many international as well as Egyptian friends. Also, I did not hear Ahmed complaining about his friends in Armenia. On contrary, I felt like he was quite successful in making friends in Armenia.

Ahmed's data showed that, in spite of the help it received from an Armenian family, the period after immigration was very hard for Ahmed's family (as a result of the poor job market in Armenia, for example). I derived from the data provided by Ahmed that he decided to learn Armenian not only for the sake of continuing his education but because it would help him interact with Armenians and make his integration easier.

Ahmed's religious identity did not seem to have undergone many changes while he was residing in Armenia. In terms of his social identity, Ahmed noticed changes in the way he thought and approached issues. He thought that the main reason for those changes was that being a member of Armenian society was quite distinct from being a member of Egyptian society. Thus, I assumed that, for the sake of being integrated, Ahmed accepted the rules of Armenian society but at the same time did not consider himself a European.

Further, as I could see from Ahmed's data, he enjoyed being a student at Yerevan State University. He had many Armenian friends, and he practiced Armenian with them and seemed to be accepted by them. Ahmed also fully perceived that the profession of his choice (Armenian History) could help him integrate better into Armenia's society. In addition, he considered his integration and involvement in the life of his educational

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institution very important because he thought that it could have a positive impact on his integration outside his institution. His data did not show that he had any problems making Armenian friends. However, his data did reveal that he faced a negative attitude from his professors that seemed to be quite bothersome for him.

Finally, the data showed that Ahmed liked the idea of the Bologna Process, and he was glad that the policy provided him with the flexibility of subject choice as well as the opportunity to transfer his credits to other European universities. At the same time, Ahmed did not consider Yerevan State University to be ready for an expensive educational policy such as the Bologna Process. Thus, Ahmed's data showed that the tuition fee seemed to be high for his parents, and he had problems finding scholarships for his studies. Access to educational services such as the library and computer lab was also limited, and this limitation hindered the process of the import and export of knowledge in its entirety and limited the opportunities of international research. Another important point indicated by Ahmed was that Yerevan State University officials elected the students who could participate in decision making process, which violated one of the key points of Bologna Declaration. The data indicated that a limited number of professors were ready to teach in international classrooms, a situation which resulted in the maltreatment of students like Ahmed. The general negative attitude of professors toward Ahmed made him question and doubt his full integration into Armenian society.

Sasan's case study.

Brief overview of Iran.

Iran and the regions surrounding it practice Persian ethnic culture. Iran does not have a very large, predominating ethnic community due to the significant size of its

Arabic and Turkish communities. According to Melikyan (2010), since ancient times Iran has been a multi-ethnic country. Boyajyan (2011) pointed out that the formation, development, as well as the use of the Iranian identity took place in accordance with the political system as well as the form and nature of the government in Iran. This means that the meaning of "Iranian identity" has gone through changes in different historical periods. Afanasyev (2009) observed that the Achaemenians considered themselves Iranians because they were members of a group united by one common language, religion, culture and traditions. Sassanids defined their identity based on politics as well as geographical situation (Afanasyev, 2009). Boyajyan (2011) pointed out that this definition lost its political and religious meaning during the Arab conquest and was replaced by a definition based only on cultural and geographical content. Later, throughout history, the political and cultural elite tried to reinforce the sense of collective identity of the people (Boyajyan, 2011).

Afanasyev (2009) indicated that Persian language and culture were very important elements of Iranian identity. The Persian language was not only the language that that Persians spoke, but it was the only language of communication for the entire Iranian geographic area and even beyond. However, this state of affairs underwent important changes during the 20th century, when the minority population of the country felt discriminated against and the power as well as position of Persian language started to become vague (Melikyan, 2010).

Mamayev (2005) mentioned that Shah Pahlavi's dynasty attempted a "revival" of the Iranian national pride which involved the Persian language, culture, art, folk art, and many other components. It is noteworthy that during Shah Pahlavi's rule, the role of

religion was no longer of high importance. According to Melikyan (2010), the Shah was trying to develop a society which would have respect for democratic values. Pahlavi's main goal was to modernize the country. Thus, he nationalized several industries and granted women suffrage (Mamayev, 2005). Unfortunately, in 1979 the Islamic Revolution brought an end to the Shah's rule.

Dictatorship and totalitarian rule were on the Iranian doorway thanks to the ideology of Shia Islam's representatives. The introduction of fundamental religious values also changed the perception of Iranian identity (Mamayev, 2005). The ideology that was once comparable to that of a number of European countries completely disappeared right after the Islamic Revolution.

Imam Khomeini believed that the Iranians were Shiites and were creators of Islamic culture all over Iran. Khomeini believed that true spiritual values would have a positive influence on the future development of the country and would be beneficial for the country's politics, culture, and the entire ideology of the Iranian population. Khomeini, basing his beliefs on general Islamic doctrines and verses, introduced the idea that Muslim was the only identification of the country's population. At the same time Khomeini recognized the cultural and ethnic diversity of the people, so that people could interact and exchange experiences within the framework of Islam (Afanasyev, 2009). In this regard, many ethnic and religious minorities residing in the country were integrated into the Iranian socio-cultural system.

Mamayev (2005) pointed out that the Muslim residents of Iran were considered to have Iranian identity regardless of their nationality or membership in a distinct group of traditional Islam. There was a division among the different groups of society though, "we

and others." "We" were the members of the society who represented the nation of Islam, and the "others" were non-Muslims. Religious practice was compulsory for each and every Muslim. The dress code for women and in some regions for men as well was quite strict. The rules regarding dress code applied to non-Muslims and even temporary visitors of Iran.

What brought Sasan to Armenia: Changes in identity.

Sasan's background.

At the time of the interview, Sasan was a Bachelor's degree student at Yerevan State University. He arrived in Yerevan in 2011. Sasan grew up in Tehran, the capital city of Iran, in an upper class family. Both of his parents were medical doctors, and they did not have any financial problems. According to Sasan, his family was not religious at all.

> My family was educated. My father is a graduate of Oxford University and my mother studied in Paris. How can they possibly be religious? We never followed any religious traditions or something like that. If we are talking about my parents' influence on my upbringing, they do have a huge influence: They brought me up as a non-religious but educated person.

Sasan explained that his family definitely impacted the development of his identity. During our conversations, I heard Sasan mention several times that his parents read to him as a kid and made him learn foreign languages. Sasan spoke four foreign languages: Armenian, Russian, English and French. To my great surprise he was equally fluent in all four. Another important thing that Sasan told me was that his parents encouraged Sasan's interaction with foreigners and especially non-Muslims.

I grew up in a community where a lot of people from different countries lived. They were mostly employees of different embassies. My parents wanted me to interact and make friends with their children. My parents would always call those children and their parents "people from the free world." And they were right. So if you are asking how my parents impacted my thinking about non-Iranians, I can tell that the influence was very positive.

When I asked Sasan to tell me more about his home country, he mentioned that there was nothing interesting in his home country except for totalitarian values and fundamentalist Islam. Sasan explained that, according to his parents, Iran used to be a democratic country during the rule of the Shah. Unfortunately, all those democratic values disappeared immediately after the Shah was no longer the leader of the country. Sasan identified himself in the following manner:

I hate identifying myself because I have never accepted the idea of labeling people in general. I don't like the idea of nationality. So when I am asked about my nationality, I never say I am Iranian. I just say that I am a male who used to live in Iran. The same thing with religion. I do not understand: If lots of people say that there is one God for all, then why do people have different religions?

As I mentioned, Sasan grew up in a multi-national community and interacted with people from different nationalities, most of whom were not Muslim. Sasan's friends were not limited to only foreign children. He explained that he also had lots of Iranian friends.

I lived in one of the richest communities of Tehran. Most of our neighbors were embassy employees or upper class Iranians. When I say upper class, I mean that they were educated, they did not have financial issues. I noticed something

interesting about educated people in Iran. When Iranians are well-educated, most of them are less religious or not religious at all. I have no idea why it is so, but I have noticed that tendency. The same was true in my Iranian neighborhood. I did have many Iranian friends, and most of them were like me. They were not really Muslim.

According to Sasan he never had major issues integrating socially with friends. In general he described himself as a very open-minded person who had good communication skills. Sasan gave lots of credit to his parents for those skills.

Sasan's perception of his religious and social identity.

As it became obvious from my conversation with Sasan, he was not raised according to the Islamic faith, and he did not consider himself a religious person. His family did not follow any religious traditions. The only thing that Sasan mentioned was that his mother and sisters (he had two older sisters) had to cover their heads when outside, because that was the law.

We did not do anything even during Ramadan. My parents do not find it healthy to not eat all day long and eat a lot at night time. It does not make any sense. And I have never seen my parents or sisters praying. So if I were to identify myself in terms of religion, I would say I am an Atheist maybe. I don't know how it is called. Can I say my religious identity is being an Atheist (laughing)?

Sasan explained that society for him meant the people around him. His point of view on what society was caught my attention.

Well, it is not an easy question to answer, but I will do my best. Society is a group of people who accept me the way I am and they don't want me to be someone else

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in order for them to accept me. This narrows down the meaning of the society a little bit. Society, in my understanding, is a group of people where I also can belong. I cannot belong in a group where people are very religious; I cannot belong in a group where people are racist, because I am not racist myself.

Sasan explained that for him social identity was his belonging to a certain social group. He included in that specific group his parents, most of his relatives, friends, and family friends. It is noteworthy that Sasan excluded some of his relatives from that group, explaining that those relatives were too religious and that they would not want to be part of that specific social group. Sassan explained:

Social identity is completely different from religious identity. Religious identity gives you only one choice, one religion. If you are Muslim, you cannot hang out with Christian group, because they will not accept you first of all and secondly you will not want to be part of that group. Social identity gives you many options. You may like certain books, a certain type of music, a certain type of movies. These different types of interests give you many choices. If you like classic music, you can always find a social group with the same interest and easily integrate there and, at the same time, be integrated in another social group which includes members who like action movies. You know what I mean…

Sasan thought that his parents had a great impact on the development of his social identity. According to him they helped him see the other side of the world. They encouraged his interaction with non-Iranians, and they taught him to be communicative and open minded. Sasan mentioned that the community where he lived during his childhood also influenced the development of his social identity in a positive manner.

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If it were not for the community where I lived, I would have a really hard time interacting with foreign people. From the moment I was born, I knew that there are people other than Iranians. And, trust me, there are many people in Iran that do not accept foreigners. Those communities are closed for others, and people like me do not want to be there.

Sasan considered his communication skills one of the most important aspects of his social identity. He also thought that respect toward other members of society and other cultures was another aspect of his social identity which was likewise of high importance.

Immigration to Armenia and shifts in identity.

Sasan explained that his family did not immigrate to Europe. Sasan was the only person among his family members who came to Armenia to continue his education and decided to become an immigrant. He explained that he liked it in Armenia. Sasan decided to stay also because one of his childhood friends immigrated to Armenia with his entire family. Sasan explained that Armenia was the closest European country to Iran and he would not have any problems with being issued a visa.

Sasan indicated that transition was not easy. First he had to live in dorms and then he had to find an apartment for rent.

When people find out you are from Iran, they don't want to rent you an apartment. I don't know what they think, maybe that you are going to break everything in their apartment. So that is why I decided to stay in the dorms before I tried finding an apartment. I am still sharing an apartment with some Iranian friends.

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The adaptation process was not easy either. Sasan mentioned that he felt like

Armenians did not really like Iranians and that they tried to keep a distance. Before

starting schooling, Sasan had to learn Armenian, because he wanted to take classes with

the mainstream of students instead of being enrolled in evening classes for foreigners

only.

> There are lots of Armenians who speak Persian, so that is how I found a tutor of
>
> Armenian as well as Russian. I decided to learn both languages. Armenians are
>
> fluent in Russian and I thought it would be easier for me to integrate. After I
>
> finished taking classes in Armenian, I applied to Yerevan State University. The
>
> application process for foreign students is not complicated at all. If you have
>
> money to pay your tuition then you have no problem at all.

> When I asked Sasan about local residents, he explained that at first they were not

supportive at all. Sasan indicated that he still had problems and that there were many

obstacle that he needed to overcome. Sasan mentioned that he found some Armenian

friends who continued to be very supportive.

> Sasan told that he felt like Armenians did not like him because they thought he

was Muslim.

> Once an Armenian guy invited me for lunch and he ordered coke and beef for me,
>
> telling me that I can't drink alcohol and eat pork. I did not understand whether he
>
> was trying to make fun of me or it was just the way he thought about me. So I
>
> cancelled the order and left. I was offended. Other than that, I think that there are
>
> prejudices toward Muslims in general. I don't feel like Armenians want to have
>
> Muslim friends.

When I asked Sasan to think about the religious and social changes he had gone through after immigration to Armenia, his response surprised me very much. Sasan indicated the following:

I would never think that I could ever have this type of feeling. When asked what nationality I am, I reply that I am an Armenian citizen. It would not be true to say that I feel I am Armenian, but I want others to feel that I am Armenian. I don't know what type of feeling this is, but I really tend to be part of this society. I am trying to speak Armenian all the time. Even when I am somewhere outside with my Iranian friends, I am trying to speak English with them, so that people do not understand that I am Iranian.

Another surprising thing was that when asked about his religion, Sasan explained that his answer was always Christian, even though he did not have a good knowledge about religion in general and Christianity in particular.

As Sasan indicated before, he shared an apartment with an Iranian friend. The building where they rented the apartment was in one of the suburbs of Yerevan, and many Iranians lived in the same community.

I do interact with Iranians in my community, but I am mostly trying to interact with locals. As I have decided to make Armenia my home, I need to integrate, and I think my interacting with Iranians will not make my integration easier. I don't want you to think that I am trying to forget my culture. We still cook Iranian food and invite friends over, we celebrate national holidays, and we speak Farsi at home. I just prefer to hang out with Armenian friends more, because I think they teach me more about Armenian culture, and also they can introduce me to other

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Armenians as well. All during these years, I have realized that, if I want to win

this game called integration, I need to follow its rules.

Sasan had very positive feelings about being European. He thought that European

society had lots of respect toward democratic values, which he could not find back in

Iran. Sasan saw Europe as an open community, which gave him a wider range of

opportunities.

I think that there are many common things among Armenians and Iranians. For

example, the food is almost the same as in Iran. Also, there are many Iranians that

look exactly like Armenians. I think we belong to the same race, maybe I am

wrong.

Sasan did not see major changes in his social identity, indicating that, thanks to

his communication skills and open mindedness, he was able to find friends with the same

interests.

Experiences with European education.

Sasan at Yerevan State University.

At the time of the interview, Sasan was a second year student at the Faculty of

Biology at Yerevan State University. He chose biology because he was interested in

bioengineering.

I think my profession will be helpful for my future career because bioengineering

is a field that is very important for our modern society. If I become a bioengineer,

I can work in various laboratories and conduct tests related to illnesses and detect

the reasons which make those illnesses occur. I am also hoping to find some ways

of curing those illnesses.

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As mentioned previously, Sasan preferred to learn Armenian first in order to be able to attend classes along with the mainstream of students, instead of enrolling in evening classes. He did not find it hard to be a student at Yerevan State University. He thought that if all students studied hard, they would not have major problems.

When I asked Sasan about his professors and the way they treated him he told that:

> At the very beginning of my schooling here, it was not easy. I did not have any friends, and professors did have some kind of prejudice toward me. When they found out I am from Iran, they tried to avoid asking me questions during the seminars, and their attitude toward me seemed strict. But as time went by, their attitude changed. Some professors told me that they did not expect me to turn out to be a good student. Overall, they like me I think. There are a couple of professors that still approach me with an attitude, but they are older generation professors.

Sasan explained that from the first day of his schooling in Armenia he made it clear that he was not religious at all and that he did not like Islam. He also indicated that people (including his peers and his professors) did not believe him at first, but, according to Sasan, it was just a matter of a couple of months. Sasan said that the professors in general were very helpful. If he had questions, he could always approach them, and they would explain everything in detail.

Sasan had many Armenian friends at the University. In fact, he interacted mostly with Armenians and spoke Armenian at all times.

As I am a very sociable person, I could easily make friends with Armenians. I
even have an Armenian girlfriend. She is my classmate. Her parents were against
our being together at first, but now that they have gotten to know me, they are fine
with us going out together. But I want to tell you that I am dating my girlfriend
since the first month of my schooling. At first a lot of students stopped talking to
my girlfriend, and I would hear them saying "why are you going out with that
Muslim, he is going to kill you after all." But again, now everything has changed.
Everyone knows I am not Muslim and they are treating me really well.

I have noticed that Iranian students in Armenia wore a different type of clothing,
so that people could easily identify their ethnic background. Their clothing was colorful,
and their hairstyle was different from the rest of the students. So when I asked Sasan
about his clothing, he explained that he never wanted to be different. He indicated that he
sometimes even wore a cross around his neck.

Sasan's perception of integration was noteworthy. He indicated that being
integrated into his educational environment was important to him; otherwise, his entire
schooling would be a complete failure.

Integration for me is having the same value system as other members of the
Armenian society. I think if I act like Armenian and think like Armenian, my
integration will be much easier. But there are several issues that still hinder my
full integration. One of the major issues I would like you to know is that people's
attitude toward me seems to be good, but they do not consider me Armenian.
Remember I told you about couple of old generation professors. They still call me
Parsik (Persian), and I don't like it because they do it with a negative connotation.

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Sasan mentioned that the labels used by some professors had the potential of changing the positive attitude of his peers and other professors toward him to a negative one.

Right now I don't see any solutions which would help change their attitude toward me. They think I am *Parsik*, which means I am a Muslim and, accordingly, I am a bad and dangerous person. There is a Ukrainian guy in my group, and I have never seen any labels or nicknames attached to him by the same professors. And I realize why they are label free, it is because they are Christians.

Sasan thought that the educational environment did have an impact on his integration into Armenian society in general. He explained that he had made many friends at Yerevan State University. He also noted that he frequently went out with his friends and widened his social circle by making new friends.

I do go out with my Iranian friends, but I prefer to hang out with my Armenian friends because that way my integration into society becomes easier. Many other people get to know me (such as friends of friends), and I meet new people. So this helps me widen my communication and social circles. It is hard to compare though where I am more integrated—inside or outside the institution? I think inside, because my friends and I don't go out every day, maybe during weekends, because most of the time we are studying during the week. So I think that for now I am more integrated inside my institution.

When we talked about the means that the educational system could use to support Sasan's integration into Armenian society, he indicated that the university lacked

interactive student clubs, which could be useful and beneficial for students like Sasan to meet new people, who might share similar interests.

Sasan's perception of higher education in Europe.

Sasan explained that, although he did not have much specific information about the Bologna Process, he had some basic knowledge about it. He indicated that he attended several seminars about the Bologna Process organized by university officials.

> Those trainings were especially organized for students, so that we understand how things work within the new educational policy. They explained that they switched to a credit system, which allows us to select our classes. But there are also subjects that are obligatory for us to take. They also explained that the policy is quite student-centered and that we as students can participate in decision making, express our concerns, etc. I also know that our diplomas are accepted in almost all European countries and that we don't have to pass additional tests, we just need to transfer my credits to the university of my own choice.

Sasan noted that he liked the idea of the flexibility of diplomas. He indicated that he would like to continue his education somewhere in Europe and that the Bologna Process with its credit system would give him many opportunities to do so. When we talked about the negative aspects of Bologna, Sasan mentioned that he was not enrolled in student organizations that participated in decision making.

> I would really love to be a part of the decision making. I don't know how they choose the students who can be a part of the student body, but I am not there and I don't like it. I told you I have problems with a couple of professors, so if I was a part of the student body, I could voice my problems and maybe many things

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would change. I think the elections of the student body members are not transparent enough, I don't think that those elections are democratic either. I think some students have really good connections with university officials, and that is how they are elected.

Sasan thought that the above-mentioned aspects could actually have negative impact on his future career. He explained that some professors did not limit themselves to just treating him with an attitude, they also give him very low grades on his exams. Another important thing that Sasan mentioned was that he found the content of his subjects too intense.

I think I have to study all day and night long because overall the years of our schooling are short. They compressed the lengthy content of the subjects and it got really intense. I think it is too much, and I am having trouble with digesting so much information.

When we discussed policy's influence on Sasan's integration, not only into his educational environment but also into Armenian society in general, Sasan indicated that he did not feel that policy could play a role of an integrator.

I have mentioned before that there are no interactive clubs in our faculty, where students and professors can get together and discuss different things. I have heard that, in almost all universities all over Europe which implement Bologna, there are many clubs for students which students attend, share their interests, make presentations, etc. Another important thing is to have more interactive classrooms. Unfortunately, we only have lecture type classes, where we just sit and listen to what professors say. The only place where we interact and share our thoughts is

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the lab. So, if I were to change some aspects of higher educational policy, I would

encourage student-professor interaction and make the content of the subjects less

intense. I would also suggest to have seminar type classes, where mostly students

would lead the discussion. But unfortunately I am not among the decision makers,

so I don't think I can change anything.

Sasan thought that the educational policy would have a better influence on the

educational environment if younger professors were hired to teach. He indicated that

almost all professors in his faculty were representatives of the Soviet system, and they

had a hard time getting in-tune with modern educational policy. Sasan noted that it would

be better to at least organize trainings for those professors.

I think if the professors adopt a modern approach to teaching, the overall

environment will change and become more delightful for all of us. There are only

two young professors in our faculty who got their degrees abroad. When I

compare their teaching to that of the elder professors, I feel like the elder

professors do not teach, they just read to us whatever there is in the textbook.

Sasan continued his discussion on his institution's educational environment by

indicating that, overall, education is accessible for him. He found the access easy because

he could speak Armenian. The only problem that Sasan indicated was the financial

burden of the education.

There are many students who just withdraw because they can't pay their tuition.

So the prices do limit the access. Well, my parents still help me. But I have to say

that there is no feasible scholarship system in Armenia that would allow students

to apply and in case of success be covered tuition-wise. I am saying that I don't

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really have major problems paying my tuition and getting access to education, but there are many students that do.

Sasan stressed that during the first months of his schooling it was very hard for him to be a student at the university because he did not feel accepted, neither by the professors nor by the students. He mentioned that he was nicknamed "terrorist," and many people would refer to him by that epithet, which was offensive to him.

> They thought I am a Muslim terrorist, and I did not like it. At first, I thought about going back to Iran, but then I decided to stay and see what happens. After a month or so, I already had friends, and I was really happy about it. After my peers got to know me, their attitude started to change. The same with the professors, except for some of them. I don't know if I can consider that I was accepting the messages from the people around me, but the word "terrorist" seemed to be really offensive. I decided to stay, which means that I did not accept those messages. Now I think I am almost the same as other Armenian students.

Interpreting Sasan's data.

Sasan's data showed that he lived in an upper-class family of well-educated medical doctors. His family never struggled financially. Both of his parents were educated in Europe. According to Sasan's data, his family had a great respect for democratic values, which his parents successfully instilled in him, and greatly influencing the development of Sasan's identity.

Sasan grew up in an environment where education was important. This could be one of the reasons why he became fluent in four foreign languages, Armenian, Russian, English and French. Also, his parents taught him as a child to be respectful toward other

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nationalities and communicate not only with Iranians but also with foreigners. Because Sasan grew up in a multinational and multicultural community, he had many foreign friends. Sasan's data showed that he had many friends, which meant that he was a communicative and sociable person

The data suggested that Sasan was not a religious person at all and had quite a negative attitude toward Islam. Sasan's family was not religious, either. As to his social identity, the data told us that to Sasan social identity meant belonging to a certain social group, in which he included his parents, most of his relatives, friends, and family friends. Because Sasan was a communicative and sociable person he was able to easily integrate into society.

According to Sasan's data, his main reason for moving to Armenia was education, but he decided to stay in Armenia and become an Armenian citizen not just because of the education but also because of the more or less democratic values of the country. Despite the fact that he was often rejected by Armenian society, he seemed to like Armenia. Moreover, he learned Armenian, spoke Armenian most of the time, and interacted mostly with Armenians.

Sasan's data revealed that his identity had undergone changes. A review of his history showed that he did not like labels like "nationality." In Armenia, when asked his nationality, Sasan preferred to answer that he was an Armenian citizen. Another surprising fact was that Sasan, who was an atheist, chose to present himself as a Christian. The data showed that Sasan tended to assimilate with Armenian society in order to avoid being rejected.

The data told us that Sasan was quite integrated in his university environment despite the fact that there were some professors who treated him with a bad attitude. Sasan realized that the educational environment could affect his integration into Armenian society in general, which made him communicate and interact with many Armenian students. Despite the fact that Sasan had many Iranian friends, he tried to hang out with Armenian friends, so that he could have more groups of friends. Many Iranian students dressed in a style that would distinguish them as Iranians, but Sasan did not wear clothing which would make it obvious that he was not Armenian. On the contrary, he tried to look Armenian as much as possible, so that he was accepted by his professors as well as peers. The data also showed that, overall, Sasan was a good and hard-working student, which helped him break the negative attitudes toward him.

Sasan, like other students studying at Yerevan State University, had a general understanding of the Bologna Process. His data revealed that he liked the flexibility aspect of the process, which allowed him to transfer his credits to a European University if he decided to continue his education abroad. The data revealed that Sasan was not a part of a student body, which limited his ability to voice his education-related problems. Sasan would like to be part of the student body, because that way he could actively participate in decision making. According to Sasan, students needed to have good connections with university officials to be able to be a part of the student body and participate in decision making,

As derived from data the university failed to organize interactive student clubs where the students could get to know one another, share their knowledge and interests,

and so on. Moreover, the classrooms were not interactive either. Instead, professors preferred the lecture-type method of teaching.

The age and education of professors was another matter which did not seem to be in tune with Bologna declaration requirements and had a negative impact on the overall educational environment. The data also revealed that, according to Sasan, who found his own education quite accessible financially, the lack of a feasible scholarship system hindered the full access to education of many others.

Finally, overall Sasan liked the environment of his institution and considered himself equally rightful as any Armenian student, despite the fact that, during the first months of his classes, he faced bad treatment and offensive remarks.

University Frankfurt Am Main, Germany

I conducted the second series of interviews of my research in Frankfurt, Germany. Only five students showed a willingness to participate in my research. I conducted individual interviews with each of them in order to be able to choose three students, whose stories would be interesting to share and who would feel comfortable in sharing those stories. The students were representatives of the following countries: Turkey, Iraq, and Lebanon. All three participants were students at University Frankfurt Am Main. One of the students in German group was a second generation immigrant, unlike the Armenian group of students, who were all first generation immigrants.

Erdi's case study.

Brief overview of identity in Turkey.

Turkish identity is quite complex and multilayered. Jenny White (2002), a social anthropologist, defined Turkish identity as an ethnic-racial community. According to

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White (2002), certain forms of Turkish citizens' national identity were developed during their education and military service. White (2002) pointed out that Kemalist nationalism was based on "Turkishness," which linked together gender and Islam. This meant that Turkey could have a multicultural society with different cultures residing in the country, but those people were by no means considered Turkish if their religion was not Islam. White (2002) explained that the ethno-religious identification of Turks dated back to 1920, when language, culture, and religion started to serve as the main means of identifying Turks.

Kemalist nationalism also created the illusion of having many enemies who were non-Muslims residing outside as well as inside Turkish territory. This explained the continued disadvantaged treatment of national minorities in Turkey. Another important aspect that White (2002) revealed was that Kemalist nationalism taught Turks to show skepticism toward people who were not like them, because it considered those people potentially detrimental for Turkey. Consequently, this type of nationalism divided the country into different groups, namely Muslims as opposed to non-Muslims, Turks as opposed to Kurds, and so on.

Discussing the complexity of the identity issue in Turkey, Minayev (2014) pointed out that there was a noticeable opposition among two major groups: well-educated hierarchies and fundamental Islamists. This growing opposition was especially obvious in cities like Istanbul, where the religious Turks usually supported one another in their struggle against groups of people whose worldviews differed from theirs. They usually treated other groups as their potential enemies.

White (2002) asserted that the new Islamic bourgeoisie was in the midst of developing a new Turkish national identity. The main representatives of this new type of identity were an educated generation of youth. The values that guided the new generation of Islamic bourgeoisie differed from the values of the previous generation. There was a segment of the youth population whose members could use alcohol and eat pork, and there was a segment of the youth population whose members, for example, wore the *hijab* and strictly followed religious rituals. Despite the fact that those groups were quite different, they thought the same way about cultural aspects such as education, literature, traveling, life-related problems, even questions related to the development of a new Turkish identity. What divided them was not their religious orientation or preference, but their social status: one group belonged to the lower social class and the other to the middle or upper social classes. This meant that the members of society who had lower class status and struggled with poverty adhered to patriarchal as well as authoritarian values and practices. Those who belonged to the middle and upper social classes, opposed the changes suggested by prime-minister Erdogan. In other words, people who were lucky enough to get better education and look at life from various angles, would try to seek and support more democratic values as opposed to people, who are not well-educated (e.g. members of society with lower class status).

As White (2002) asserted, the polarization of those two main groups (the poor as opposed to the middle and upper classes) was one of the main causes for the argument regarding what the new Turkish identity should look like, whether or not the religion should remain the most important identifier of Turkish identity.

Daloglu (2011) pointed out that Erdogan was leading Turkey toward Islamic fundamentalism: "Turkish society has always been conservative, but that element is being accentuated, especially when it comes to issues like women's attire, women in the workplace, relationships between men and women and alcohol consumption" (p. 8).

Predicting how the younger generation of Turks was going to behave in this conflicting situation of polarized society and groupings was a complicated matter. Mirzayev (2005) mentioned that many middle class families preferred to immigrate and seek freedom and a better life for their children elsewhere.

What brought Erdi to Germany: Changes in identity.

Erdi's background.

At the time of the interview, Erdi was a 22 years old student, born and raised in Berlin, Germany. His parents immigrated from Turkey when they were in their twenties to find better economic opportunities in Europe. According to Erdi, his parents' choice to immigrate to Germany was random.

> My parents came to Germany because I think there were many Turkish people here and I think they were hoping for support from those Turkish people. When they came to Germany, life was not easy for them at all. They had to live in special immigration camps first, before they could find housing. Though the government financially supported all immigrants, the money was not enough for a decent living. My parents had to learn German and find jobs. And they did. My father started to work in the construction sphere and my mom started to attend college to become a nurse. They came to Germany in 1991, and in 1993 I was

born, which made the life even harder because my parents did not have enough

money.

Erdi explained that back in Ankara his parents belonged to a lower class family

and grew up in the suburbs of the city. According to Erdi, his parents always had great

respect toward religious values. They followed all religious customs and rituals related to

Islam. This respect and love toward Islam was passed down through the generations,

meaning Erdi was taught to love and highly esteem his religion. His parents also had

great influence on the development of Erdi's identity in general.

> My parents always tell me that Muslim people are different from the rest of the
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> world. They have always taught me to be respectful and supportive toward
>
> Muslims, especially in a non-Muslim country. When I was a child, I was scared to
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> interact with locals, because I thought that my parents would not like it, and also I
>
> thought that Germans would not want me to talk to them and that they would hurt
>
> me somehow.

When we started discussing Turkey, Erdi mentioned that he had been in Turkey

previously and that the only thing that he enjoyed there was his relatives. He mentioned

that it would be hard for him to live in Turkey, because he did not get a sense of freedom

there, compared to Germany. Despite the fact that Erdi saw many people from different

ethnic and religious backgrounds residing in Turkey, according to him he felt a kind of

unexplainable fear.

> Maybe the fear that I experienced, while visiting Ankara, was related to the fact of
>
> not being accepted by Turkish society. I don't know. I got scared and I wanted to
>
> come back to Germany. My relatives told me that I had a German accent in my

Turkish, and I felt like they did not like it. Also, I was trying to make friends, and I did make some friends, but I did not feel they treated me as a real friend, you know. After living so many years in Germany, it is hard to go back to Turkey for the first time, live there for 2 months and make comparisons. Also, sometimes I hear parents saying that at some point they want to go back to Ankara, because they think they can make a better living there now. But I am not going back. I don't feel Turkish. I feel German, and I speak German better than Turkish. Also, I am independent now, and I have my friends here.

Erdi indicated that, in general, he did not have any difficulty integrating into his groups of friends. When Erdi was a child, they lived in a community where most of the residents were immigrants from Muslim countries. So he made friends with many of the children residing in the same community. Though the children had various ethnic backgrounds, Erdi did not feel it was hard for him to integrate into his groups of friends as well as into his community.

Erdi's perception of his religious and social identity.

As mentioned before, Erdi indicated that he was raised with great respect toward Islam and all the customs, traditions, and rituals related to it. His parents taught him how to pray, how to wash separate parts of the body before praying, how to fast, how to be a good servant for God, and so on. Erdi mentioned that his family always dedicated around two hours to reading the Quran. It was important for the whole family to be at home and listen to what their father read. Erdi recalled that as a child he frequently went to the mosque with his father to attend religious services.

When I was younger, I was an active practitioner of Islam. I never missed a thing related to it because I was scared that my parents would be really mad at me. It also did not matter for me that I was practicing religion in a Christian country because I did not think that Germans cared. Another thing that I used to do was wear special clothing that Muslims wear, so that everyone knew my religious belonging. My mother and both sisters still wear *hijab* and cover their faces. I don't understand why they do it, though, after living so many years in Europe.

Erdi described society as a group of people which allowed him to be a part of it. When I asked him about the notion of his social identity, he defined his social identity as: "the way that society sees me or wants me to be." Erdi thought that social identity was completely different from religious identity, explaining that he could be a member of Christian society, while his religion was Islam.

I think that my religious and social identity could be compatible when I was residing in a Muslim immigrant community while in Berlin. Now I think that my social identity is who I am for German society and how other members of this society see me. I am trying to be a good member of society. I love this country and I think that society with its social identities taken together, make this country as good and free as it is. Thus, while being a part of this society I am trying to be open minded, honest, helpful, and also respectful toward the values of this society.

When talking about the specific factors which had an impact on the development of his social identity, Erdi indicated that his parents were inclined toward his communication with people of the same religion. The way his parents saw things greatly

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influenced the way Erdi himself perceived society. He mentioned that he did not have any German friends even when he started going to school. Erdi and many other children from his community attended the same public school, so Erdi did not feel the urge to make friends with German students because he had many friends among Muslims.

Many things changed after Erdi grew up. Because he was an excellent student at school, he applied to the University of Frankfurt Am Main to study physics. He was accepted and so he had to change his residence and live in Frankfurt without his parents.

My parents did not like the idea that I wanted to continue my education at the University. They just wanted me to go and work like other children from my community. But I really wanted to learn physics because I always loved it. My parents were also against the fact that I had to lead a separate life. But I made my decision and moved to Frankfurt. My parents were and still are mad, so we do not really communicate now. After I came to Frankfurt, I saw the real Germany. It is very different from the one I knew. For a guy like me, who grew up in a poor community, among Muslims, and who never had German friends, it was like discovering a new world and feeling like a completely new person in this society. The first year was really hard for me. I knew no one, and no one wanted to know me. I continued practicing my religion. During prayer hour, I would find a place to pray inside the University. And I saw people looking at me strangely, because I was the only one praying, so I don't think at that period of time anyone wanted to approach me. I realized I needed to change.

Immigration to Europe and shifts in identity.

As Erdi indicated at the beginning of our conversation he was born and raised in Berlin, Germany. His parents immigrated to Germany in 1991. Erdi's parents belonged to a lower-class family in Turkey, and they resided in one of the poorest suburbs of Ankara. His parents' education was limited to high school. Erdi mentioned that his parents decided to immigrate to Germany to seek better economic conditions for their children's future. Erdi explained that it was not easy for his parents to start a new life in Germany. At first they had to live in immigrant camps. They received a small amount of financial aid from the government, which actually helped them to rent a very small apartment in a community where lots of Muslim immigrants resided.

His father sought a job for around seven months. He was lucky to find a job in construction work, which was owned by a Turkish man who was born in Germany. Erdi's mom decided to get a qualification of a nurse in order to find a job as a nurse.

While trying to overcome economic hardships, his parents also had a hard time integrating into the completely new society. They did not speak German, European culture was new and unfamiliar to them, and, most importantly, they did not have any relatives residing in Germany. At the same time, they were true followers of Islamic religious traditions and rituals.

> I think that German society would not accept them because of their religious views. It is hard to explain to a free European society that there are parts of the world where religion plays the most important role. I think religion and language were the main obstacle to their integration. My parents are still very religious, and most of the time they speak Turkish. Another thing is that they almost never interact with Germans.

When we talked about shifts in Erdi's identity, Erdi explained that he felt brainwashed by Islam. He decided to stop using religious clothing as his first step toward bigger changes. Erdi said that in reality he never felt religion in his heart, explaining that he was practicing religion because his parents wanted him to. Thus, Erdi mentioned that by giving up his religious practices he found the real him, which made his life easier. Erdi indicated that he had never been Turkish because he was born and raised in Germany:

Well, I consider myself European, I am German; that is what is written in my passport. I don't look German, but I consider myself German, and when people ask me about my nationality, I tell them that I am German. I don't even know what it is to be Turkish. I speak German better than Turkish, and I know German culture better than Turkish culture. I am not even Muslim any more, which is what is required to be considered Turkish. I decided for myself that I don't believe in God. My family is still Muslim. They do practice religion, and they do celebrate Turkey-related holidays, but I am no longer there, so I don't care. I love freedom and don't want to lose it.

Erdi explained that religion was a great barrier for his integration. He felt like Christian Germans did not like Muslims. He indicated that he was having a hard time making friends with his German peers.

It is still difficult for me because I feel like many Germans don't trust me. See what is going on in the world, how many people are killed every day. And the killers are Muslims. I understand that not all Muslims are killers, there are lots of honest and good Muslims, but people from other religious backgrounds have lots of prejudices toward Muslims, and I completely understand the reasons behind

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those prejudices. I have decided to make this country my home, so I want to deserve my home. I want to be accepted by German society and become a lawful member of this society. My religion would not let me integrate. Just being Erdi will help me more than being Turkish Muslim Erdi. I cannot say that I am fully integrated now. There are still lots of hardships I need to overcome, but I hope for a better life and easier integration.

Experiences with European education.

Erdi at Frankfurt Am Main.

Erdi said he had always been interested in science, especially in physics. He chose physics as a profession with the hope of finding an interesting job in a scientific institution in Europe and conducting research in the field. At the time of the interview, Erdi was a third-year bachelor's degree student and believed that in his institution there remained many barriers that he needed to overcome.

> At first I was really having a hard time finding German friends. There were lots of cliques in my institution. Germans would get together in one corner, other Europeans would interact only with one another. There were some Muslims I started to talk to, but their way of thinking was different from mine. I was trying to approach Germans and other Europeans, but they would always keep that distance, you know, when you feel like people don't want you around them. Many of those students would just ask my ethnic background and religion and then just go away. Next day they would not even say hello. So I understood that something was wrong with my religion and ethnicity.

Erdi explained that he did not feel treatment from his professors, but he felt that the treatment of locals was much better. Erdi mentioned that he would see many of his professors talking to local Europeans during the break, laughing, joking with them, and so on.

We had a lab class once. I think it was the first semester of my studies. All of us got together in a lab for a science-related experiment. It was biology class. And so we all started our experiment. The most important point is that we all had to be in groups of fours. For 20 minutes, I could not locate myself in a group, because none of the students expressed a wish to involve me in their group. At last, when I was already in a group and we were all working on our experiments, the professor approached. He started to ask questions to each and every member of the group, except for me. When the professor turned to me, the only question that he asked was if I spoke German. It sounded so offensive that I could not even reply.

Erdi realized that his religion, his ethnicity, and even clothing played a role in his being treated differently. He decided to change in order to be able to integrate. According to Erdi, his integration was crucial for him. He indicated that without being integrated, he could not be a regular student in his university, and it would be hard for him to attend classes together with a group of students who did not accept him.

I started to wear different clothing, like all other Germans do. I changed my haircut. I started listening to a different type of music. I stopped praying at the University. I started behaving differently and being more active during classes. You know, I think integration is very important. For me being integrated means having equal opportunities with other students, sharing thoughts, asking questions

as others do. That is how I see being integrated into the life of my own institution. My parents were really mad at me when they found out about the changes I made with my life. But the problem is they don't want to see the other side of the coin. They are very conservative.

Erdi said that with the changes undertaken by him, his integration into his educational environment got easier. According to Erdi, German students did not seem distant any more, and he was even successful in making friends with them. Erdi also could find friends among other nationalities, and he seemed to be more or less satisfied.

I am more or less integrated right now, but I think that I still need to overcome many barriers. I do have friends among Europeans, but it is not exactly the way I see it: I imagine friendship differently. Another important thing is that there are professors whose attitude toward me is still unclear. I am sure they don't like me. They don't tell me about it, but I can feel it. I think that for complete integration there should be no barriers while interacting with professors as well. I must feel free to ask them questions and receive answers to my questions. But for now I do not really feel that freedom.

Erdi thought that his integration into his institution could potentially help him better integrate into German society as well. He explained that having many German friends, allowed him to go out with them and know more people. Also, he indicated that if others saw him among Germans, they wouldn't keep a distance from him.

I don't go out frequently with my German friends because they rarely call me to go out. As to a couple of my Muslim friends, I don't want to go out with them. I told you they still think differently. They were not born in Germany. They came

here only few years ago, and they don't speak fluent German. So if people see me with them, I will lose all the changes I made with my life. Another important thing is that if my professors see me hanging out with German guys, their attitude might change toward the better. So, as of right now, I think I am more integrated inside the institution than outside of it. As to my institution playing a role of integrator—let's see, it is a hard question to answer. We have many clubs in our institution and we do many group projects and group discussions. I think it encourages overall integration communication wise. It is the attitude of some professors that has a negative influence on my overall integration.

Erdi's perception of higher education in Europe.

When I discussed German higher education with Erdi, he explained that he did not know much about the Bologna Process. He explained that he had some general knowledge about it, but he was not familiar with the details.

I like being a student here. All the subjects I am enrolled in are very important and useful, and I think that knowledge-wise I get a lot of information that I need. Another important thing is that the university is technologically well-equipped, and students can use the internet to acquire additional materials and information, have access to online libraries, participate in online conferences and interact with colleagues overseas. All those aspects have a really positive influence on my education. For instance, I have made many contacts abroad and, whenever there are conferences, they send me information about those conferences and I can sign up and attend. Also, I have registered to receive online physics-related journals,

which also have a positive influence on my overall education. Another important thing is that, since the year 2014, higher education in Germany is free of charge.

During our conversation, Erdi did not leave out the negative aspects of higher education. He singled-out and emphasized the biased treatment of students by some professors.

There was a statistics course that I was enrolled in. It was mostly a lecture type course. The professor came in and mentioned that he had prepared a sign-up sheet for students who wanted to be enrolled in a practical course on the same subject. The sign-up sheet was only for 15 students, which meant the number of students was limited. The process was the following: after the class, each student had to approach the professor and tell him his name to enroll in the course. There were only 13 students who approached the professor, and I was among them. When my turn came, the professor looked at me with great surprise and told me: "I don't think you need this practice." He then signed up two other German students who did not even approach him. I don't know why he did that, but overall I always knew that he did not like me because he almost never answered my questions.

Erdi thought that all the instances of unequal treatment had the potential to hinder his integration into his own institutional environment and, as a consequence, influence his integration into German society later on. He emphasized that mistreatment could, in particular, harm his relationships with his German friends as well.

When the professor is German, other Germans friends see his attitude. As he is a professor, students usually have respect toward him. So they might think that he is doing the right thing when he treats me badly. That way I can easily lose my

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German friends, and I don't want that to happen. When you ask me about what

aspects of my higher education policy I would change for my own benefit, I have

to answer that I would introduce hours for individual meetings with professors,

especially for immigrant students like me. I don't blame the professors. They

don't know me. But when they turn on the TV, they hear many negative things

about Islam. And yes, there are many things going on now, see all those terrorist

attacks in France… I think, as a consequence, there is a big chance that professors

can be scared of a student whose parents are Turkish Muslim immigrants. Those

individual meetings with professors would allow us to talk about different related

issues and help professors understand us better.

According to Erdi the student population of the university was quite diverse. He

also asserted that all students wanted their individual needs to be fulfilled, but at the same

time Erdi did not see that the higher education policy in effect approached each student's

needs individually. Erdi himself did not remember participating in decision making

processes or voicing his problems.

I think that when you have a diverse student population, you should be ready to

address diverse student needs. At the same time, I would say that at least in our

faculty, we do not have many professors of different nationalities. I have never

met a professor with a Muslim background. I think to better serve the needs of

students, we should also have professors from different nationalities, because if

there is also diversity among professors, the level of unequal treatment will go

down I think. I don't know if this has to do with higher education policy, but I

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think that the policy should encourage the diversity of both, students and professors.

Erdi also proudly mentioned that, at the beginning of 2014, the German government had issued scholarships especially for Muslim immigrant students to encourage their equal access and equal opportunities. He thought that by easing Muslim students' access to education the government had used a very good technique that could potentially encourage and help immigrant students to integrate better.

Finally, Erdi mentioned that the main problems that had the potential of becoming obstacles to his integration both inside his institution and outside of it were the unequal treatment exhibited by his professors and the unspoken messages that Erdi could nevertheless sense.

> I am doing my best to not see those messages and disregard them, but what can I do when my friends keep asking questions about my bad relationship with some of the professors. My friends already think that I am to blame, though they can see that I am not doing anything bad. But because they are German as well, maybe they trust the German professors more than they trust me. I just know that I don't want to lose my friends because they are good people and could help me to integrate better.

Interpreting Erdi's data.

Erdi's was a second generation immigrant who was born and raised in Germany. His parents were religious Turks who were poor and had immigrated to Germany in search of better economic conditions. Erdi was born two years after his parents' immigration. His parents faced many hardships before they were able to achieve some

economic stability in Germany. The only educational institution that Erdi's parents had attended in Turkey was a school along with many poor children of the same neighborhood. Consequently, for them finding a well-paying job in Germany was difficult. Erdi's mother had had to attend college and learn a little bit of German in order to be able to continue her studies to become a registered nurse. Erdi's father was more or less lucky because he had found a job in construction offered by a second generation Turkish immigrant. Besides having economic issues, his parents also faced the problem of integrating into German society. Erdi's data shows, though, that they did not work very hard toward integration, and as Erdi pointed out, they did not interact with Germans very much.

When Erdi was born, his family lived in one of the suburbs of Berlin, where many other Muslim immigrants resided. The community where Erdi grew up was mostly Muslim and 80% Turkish, so he did not have many chances to interact with Germans. Most of his friends were Muslim children. The same situation existed at his school, where the student population consisted of mostly immigrants.

Erdi's family was and still is religious. As Erdi explained, his parents instilled in him respect toward Islam and its traditions. Erdi, by contrast, did not consider himself a very religious person. Moreover, while comparing Turkey and Germany, he described Germany as a country with free values where people did not need to show off their belonging to any religious group (e.g. wearing *hijab*). Erdi saw Christian German society and Muslim immigrants as mutually exclusive. Erdi did not think that he could integrate into German society by remaining a second-generation immigrant with a Muslim background. For Erdi, society was a group of people who should accept him, and he did

not seem to consider his acceptance possible without making shifts in his identity. Another intriguing nuance in Erdi's data is that Erdi's parents were against his friendship with Germans. Consequently, as a child and as a school student he only interacted with children from his community.

Erdi's parents were against him continuing his studies at an institution of higher education. Despite this conflict, Erdi thought of higher education as a valuable means to better integration into German society, the advancement of his education, and the development of his future career.

Overall, Erdi had positive feelings about his institution but at the same time thought that there were many barriers that needed to be overcome. It is also notable that Erdi went through identity changes in order to be able to become part of his institutional environment. Erdi stopped wearing religious clothing and stopped praying. He began dressing like other local European students. He did not interact very much with Muslim students, and he made an effort to make more German friends. He presented himself as German because he refused to consider himself Turkish. Despite all those changes, the treatment of Erdi by his professors compared with other local Europeans was unequal and sometimes offensive. Erdi considered his institutional integration helpful to his integration into German society. I can derive from the data that Erdi wanted to assimilate with German society and completely change his Turkish origin.

When discussing higher education in Europe and its policy, Erdi did not seem to be aware of the Bologna Process and its main principles. His data showed that he had access to many educational as well as other means that allowed him to obtain lots of important information on his subject field as well as create contacts with his colleagues

abroad. Another positive aspect of his experience was that German education became free-of-charge starting from the 2014 academic year, and it offered scholarships to Muslim students to help them cover their education-related expenses.

Finally, there were several major negative issues that the data clarified. The main issue was that Erdi did not seem to be able to voice his problems. Also, despite the existing diverse population in the institution, most of the professors were locals, which in some sense ended-up contributing to the unequal treatment of students. Based on the provided data, I can conclude that students would like to see diversity among professors as well, which they believe could help solve the problems related to mistreatment of Muslim immigrant students. As indicated, in the data Erdi thought that individual class-related meetings with professors could help solve this problem. Such meetings could give immigrant students a chance to ask class-related questions, talk about problems that they have, and, most important, help professors know their students better.

Mayana's case study.

Brief overview of Kurdish identity in Iraq.

Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the world that does not have its own state. Kurds mostly reside in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. As King (1994) explained,

> Most Kurds live in small villages in remote mountain regions. A typical Kurdish house is made of mud-brick with a wooden roof. In the summer, Kurds sleep on the roof where it is cooler. Some homes have under-ground rooms to use in the winter to escape the cold. There is rarely indoor plumbing. Water is carried into the house in jars and cans from a central village well. There is no central heating. (p.32).

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Kuyumjyan (2001) mentioned that it was important to understand who the Kurds were and how their nation was created. Kuyumjyan (2001) pointed out that the origin of Kurds has always been debated among historians and political scientists. Melkumyan (1999) indicated that the formation of Kurdish identity in Iraq went through several stages. For many centuries, until the emergence of Judaism and Christianity, many Kurds were followers of Zoroastrianism. In 636, the Arabs conquered Mesopotamia and spread Islam in the region. Moss (1992) informed us that,

> The Kurds at first resisted the Islamic invasion during the seventh century AD. They gave in after the Islamic victory near the modern-day Iraqi city of Sulaimaniya in AD 643. Most Kurds are now Sunni Muslims (a branch of Islam). About one-fifth are Shi'ite Muslims, most of whom live in Iran. Many Kurds belong to Sufi (Islam mystic) brotherhoods. They meet to chant and dance together to worship Allah. The Sufi brotherhoods are very important in Kurdish village life. There are about 1 million Kurdish 'Alawis (a secretive faith based on and distinct from Islam) in Turkey, and 40,000 to 70,000 Yazidis mostly in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Yazidism is a small religion that combines aspects of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. A very few Kurds are Christian. (p.4)

The next stage of the formation of Kurdish identity involved the heritage of various ancient nations who influenced the formation of modern Kurds and their society. The fall of the Ottoman Empire, the end of World War I and World War II, and the emergence of Kurdish nationalism brought about various changes in the geopolitical map. Chaos ruled the region. The situation of the Kurds was extremely unfavorable. Right after the end of World War II, the National Liberation Movement of Kurds was initiated. This

movement was one of the main foundations which served as means for the formation of Kurdish identity in Iraq.

The period after the Gulf War marked the beginning of the recognition of Kurdish people as a separate nation residing in Iraq, which would not be possible without the increased support from international organizations, such as the UN, USAF, RAF, and so on. The Kurdish language was accepted by a larger public, and it was taught at schools and universities and used in the media. The Kurdish people started using their national flag and anthem.

Kurdish people, while residing in Iraq, were able to establish their own infrastructure and region. With the help of telecommunications, they were able to develop ethno-national groups which could help them keep their Kurdish identity alive. Kurdish people had great respect toward their national sovereignty as well as the diaspora. As the nation did not have a homeland, Kurds had a big diaspora all over the world, including in Western countries.

Kurdish people in Iraq tried their best to keep their identity alive. They always spoke Kurdish and tried to teach the language to their children as well. Kurds tried to pass down to succeeding generations their history, culture, and national traditions. By doing so, Kurds were trying to keep their value system unshaken and safe from any possible changes. When describing Kurdish marriage and women, King (1994) mentioned that,

> Few Kurds marry non-Kurds. Couples may live with one or the other's family after marrying, but they have rooms of their own and separate housekeeping arrangements. Men and women both work in the fields, and boys and girls start

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helping at an early age. Kurdish women were traditionally not veiled except during parts of the marriage ceremony. They freely associated with men in most gatherings. If there was no qualified male heir, a woman could become a tribal leader. Even today, living in countries with conservative Islamic governments, many Kurdish women fight alongside the men as peshmerga (guerilla fighters). More than 1,000 peshmerga are women. (p. 17)

What brought Mayana to Germany: Changes in identity.

Mayana's background.

At the time of the interview, Mayana was a first year student at Frankfurt Am Main University. Her family immigrated to Germany from Iraq in 2002. Before immigrating to Iraq, Mayana's family lived in Yerevan, Armenia. Mayana grew up in a middle class family. Her grandfather was a famous academician in the field of Middle Eastern studies in Armenia. Her mother was an English language teacher at a secondary school in Armenia. Her father graduated from Yerevan State University and was a professor of physics.

Mayana grew up in a family where science and education played an important role. Her religion was Islam, but her family was not very religious, meaning her parents did not follow Islamic traditions and rituals while in Armenia

I was born in 1993 in Armenia. At that point, Armenia was in a conflict with the neighboring Muslim country, Azerbaijan. You can imagine that it was really hard for us to continue our life in Armenia. All the Armenian neighbors knew we were Kurdish (but not Yezidis), but it was not the main reason of our immigration to Iraq. We left because of the harsh conditions. It was war. My parents tell me that

there was no heat or electricity. So it was just hard to live in Armenia. Iraq was

not the best option, but at least we had some family members in Iraq. So we left.

After leaving for Iraq, many things changed in the life of Mayana's family.

Religion became one of the most important practices in her family. The atmosphere

around her became quite religious. Her parents started practicing Islamic rituals,

following all customs and traditions affiliated with Islam. Mayana and her sister started

attending a school where many subjects related to Islam were taught.

> I would not become a religious person if not for the influence of my parents. After
>
> immigrating to Iraq my parents changed a lot. I think my parents were trying to
>
> find some escape in religion after moving, and my sister and I had to become
>
> religious too.

> Mayana explained that despite being very religious, her parents were open minded

and encouraged their children's interaction with people from different ethnic as well as

religious backgrounds: "You are asking me about others. I don't really understand what

"other" means. There have always been Kurdish and people of different nationalities for

me. That is the way I was taught by my parents."

When I asked Mayana about her nationality, she explained that she was proud to

be Kurdish because she considered Kurds to be one of the ancient peoples in the world.

Mayana told that being Kurdish did have an influence on the development of her own

identity.

> There are certain things that only Kurdish people do. We have our own traditional
>
> weddings; we have our own food; we have our own language; and we have our
>
> own culture and holidays. While growing up, it was important to respect those

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national Kurdish traditions. Some kind of respect was developed toward the idea

of being Kurdish. When I tell people I am Kurdish, I always think of my people,

the value system that we have, my family, and most important, how I should live

in order to be a good Kurd.

Mayana said that in Iraq her family struggled a lot, both economically and

politically. Mayana grew up in a very poor community where most of the population was

of Kurdish origin. She said that she had friends, most of whom were Muslim. Mayana

explained that she was not very communicative as a child and her circle of friends was

not big. Despite the small number of friends, Mayana indicated that it was not hard for

her to integrate into her circle of friends. Also, Mayana indicated that among her friends

there were also Christians: "Actually, my best friend, who is also in Germany now, is

Yezidi. She is Christian, and it does not really matter. She is a very good person. My

parents like her too, and, importantly, they don't care about her religion."

Mayana's perception of her religious and social identity.

At the very beginning of our conversation, Mayana mentioned that her parents

became more religious after immigrating to Iraq. She stressed that she and her sister

attended a school where religious subjects were taught. Mayana explained that she was

religious, and her parents wanted her to follow Islamic traditions. Mayana stressed that

religion meant a lot for her.

I believed in God and faith made my life easier. Whenever I had problems and

there was no one around, I turned to God and felt like I got some help, some sort

of solution to my problems. When I was in Iraq, I strictly followed all prayer

times and attended Mosque services. I thought it was really important to do so

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because that is what my parents taught me. Once you turn to religion, you should follow the existing rules. I think it is important to attend religious services or practice religion if you are religious. Otherwise, it does not make any sense to consider oneself religious. Another thing I would like to say is that I think that in general it does not matter where you live, be that a Christian country or Muslim, you have to do what you have to do. If you, as a Muslim, feel like praying in a Christian country, it is your decision and right to do it.

Mayana explained that she used to wear a *hijab* in Iraq, but when she immigrated to Germany, many things changed, and she stopped wearing the *hijab*.

When we discussed the social identity topic, Mayana defined religious identity as one's behavior in spiritual life, and social identity as one's behavior in real life. Mayana said that, despite the fact that she was not very communicative, she never wanted to be isolated from society.

Well, the problem is that I am Kurdish, and, you know, Kurds do not really have a motherland or any specific country where only Kurds live. So I have always lived in countries where the majority of the society is non-Kurdish. I have always respected and loved my ethnic background, but I have always needed to be integrated in the society of my home country. So I think that the factors which have influenced the development of my social identity are very distinct, because I have lived in different countries and among different society members. In Iraq, for instance, to deserve acceptance into Iraqi society, I had to be modest: I had to cover my head and act like most of the Muslim women do. In Germany, it has a European value system, which feels like freedom, maybe. I think that there are

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many factors that actually influenced the development of my social identity. Those factors are numerous, and it is really complicated to name them. For me, the most important aspect of my social identity is being honest with the society into which I am trying to integrate. So maybe I should call it honesty, and maybe it has nothing to do with social identity [laughing]. That is how I feel about it.

Immigration to Germany and shifts in identity.

In 2002 Mayana's family immigrated to Bremen, Germany. The choice of the country was not random. According to Mayana, her family had many relatives and friends residing in Germany. The main reasons behind the immigration were the harsh political regime and economic hardships of Iraq. Mayana was nine years old at the time of immigration. Mayana explained that the transition was not easy at all. When they first arrived in Germany, they had to stay in special camps for immigrants before they could find jobs and a place to live. Despite the fact that they received some financial allowance from the government, they could hardly make ends meet. Another major obstacle was that none of Mayana's family members spoke German, which made the job-finding process even more complicated. After staying in Berlin for three months, their relatives helped them move to Bremen. At first they lived in a tiny apartment together with their relatives. Soon, Mayana's father found a job in a Kurdish restaurant as a waiter. Mayana's mother was not very successful. The only good thing was that she was fluent in English. She applied to some schools for a position of English-language teacher, but all schools required the knowledge of German. Mayana's mother had to enter a college to learn German. After residing in Germany for almost two years. Mayana's mom found a

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job at a German secondary school. According to Mayana, her family faced many difficulties while trying to find an apartment for rent.

> I felt like people did not want to let us live in their apartments. One of the owners even asked for our religion, and when he found out we were Muslim, he refused, saying that the previous tenants had been Turkish and had ruined his apartment. So we lived with our relatives for more than a year. After my father became the manager of the restaurant where he worked as a waiter, people got to know him, so it got easier for us to find an apartment.

When we talked about Mayana's schooling, she explained that schooling itself was not hard; it was the integration into the school environment that was hard. She mentioned that everything was different: people, culture, language, textbooks. So it took a long time to adapt to the new environment.

> Everything changed after I learned German. I started to communicate with German children. I started to understand my teachers better. I was a good student. It is hard to tell though if teachers liked me, but I can say that I worked hard. Another problem was that many children at school treated me badly. They would make fun of my clothes, and they would make fun of my accent. They thought I was not smart enough. But I think that can happen in any school. I have heard many stories about American schools, which makes me believe that it is everywhere.

When I asked Mayana about the attitude of Germans toward them, she explained that for three years her family did not really interact with Germans because the

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community where they lived was mostly Turkish and Kurdish. Mayana noted that she felt like locals had prejudices toward them, which they never showed.

There was some kind of silent dialogue between us and Germans. Germans, in general, are very educated people. They will answer any question when you ask them. They can help you if you need help, but deep inside my heart I always felt that the communication was not happening, because there has always been a distance between us.

Mayana mentioned that after immigrating to Germany, she became a different person. She said that those changes occurred after she realized that she was having hard time integrating. She mentioned that even then, at the time of the interview, she did not consider herself fully integrated.

I am always trying to avoid questions related to my nationality and religion. I think if I tell people that I am Kurdish and Muslim, I will just be left out and will not be able to integrate. I speak German when outside, but when I am at home I have to speak Kurdish because my parents want us to speak Kurdish. But it will be true to say that German dominates. My family keeps celebrating our national holidays, and our apartment is arranged in a traditional Kurdish manner. My mom always tries to cook our national food. As for religion, I try not to be at home during prayer times, not to practice it. I think I still believe in God, but I don't think it is helpful to be Muslim in Europe, especially now. To tell the truth, my religious belief has very much been influenced by what my parents have taught me. In reality, I don't think religion is important. I think that what is important is

to have faith in God, and I have it. So I don't know if I should consider this as a change in my religious identity.

Mayana mentioned that she did not wear the *hijab* or any traditional clothing. She tried to look like European so that people would accept her. Mayana did not find her integration into European society easy. She said that it would take her quite some time to feel like a part of European society. Mayana noticed some changes in her social identity as well, pointing out that after immigrating to Germany she became more open minded with society, her communication skills improved, and her thinking became more "democratic."

> I now think differently. When we were in Iraq, we all thought the same way. I think it was because the population was homogeneous. Here in Germany there are many people from different backgrounds, and people can do whatever they want. There are not many restrictions like in Iraq. In Iraq, I would never go out wearing the same clothing as I do here. I think there was no freedom there, or there was lack of freedom. Here in Germany, you can feel the freedom in the air. You just have to catch it. To be able to catch it, I think I need to be fully integrated.

Mayana's experiences with European education.

Mayana at Frankfurt Am Main.

At the time of the interview, Mayana was a first-year bachelor's degree student at Frankfurt Am Main. Her major was psychology, which she had always been interested in.

> I always thought that I should be good in supporting and helping people. I did not want to become a medical doctor, because I think one should be very strong to become a doctor and be in direct relationship with human life. I think my

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profession will be helpful in the future, though, because people need

psychologists everywhere. I especially want to work with children.

Mayana did not find it hard to be a student in her institution. She mentioned that the subjects she was enrolled in were not difficult. She explained that she was a hard-working student. But at the same time, she thought that it was hard for her to integrate. She indicated that she noticed a better attitude toward German students than immigrant students.

Once we had a test. I thought I did really well. When I got my work back, my

grade was low without any specific explanations. I asked the student next to me,

who is German, about her grade. She showed me the test, and I saw that she had

done exactly the same as I had, and yet her grade was much better. So I went to

the professor for explanation of my grade. The professor did not like my

questions, and the only thing he told me was that he had given me a lower grade

by mistake. I don't think it was by mistake. I think it was intentional, and if I had

not gone to him, it would remain really low. I think this all happened because I

am not German, and this hurts.

Mayana said that, often, her professors and peers would ask her about her ethnic background, religion, and country of origin. She explained that it was really hard for her to approach her professors during the first months of her enrollment at the institution. Mayana asserted the unwillingness of her professors to answer her questions. Overall, she did not find their attitude supportive. Mayana also mentioned that she had made friends with a couple of German students.

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I mostly interact with students with an immigrant background. The strange thing is that I have some Christian friends who are originally from Eastern Europe. And I have noticed that, despite their immigrant background, the treatment toward them is much better. I see groupings in my institution. German students mostly stick together. There are also Muslim students, who are followers of Islam. I see them always together, too. In some instances, I feel like I am neither accepted by the Christians nor by the Muslims. And it is awful. But I am happy that there are Kurds in the institution, and the way they think about things is similar to my thinking. I interact with them, too. But we mostly speak German, so that people don't ask us questions. I think there are different types of people. I understand why covered Muslims don't accept me. It is because they know that I should be Muslim, but in reality I am not. I don't even wear their type of clothing. But I feel like there are many European students who just don't want to interact with me. They don't do anything wrong, except once a German student told me that every person should live in his own country. Other than that, I can't recall any specific episodes of mistreatment. It is the overall atmosphere that makes me feel this way.

When I asked Mayana about integration, she explained that she saw it as having many friends and being accepted by everyone. She indicated that she needed to be more integrated because her future life was directly connected with Germany. She mentioned that lack of friends was a major obstacle for her integration. The only place she could interact with people was in her institution. Despite the fact that she had made some friends, she did not go out with them because her friends did not ask her out. Mayana also

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blamed the overall environment of her institution, stating that the negative attitude of her professors could potentially serve as an obstacle for her integration.

> You know I don't feel confident. If my professors treated me better I would have confidence. I would talk to everyone. I would make friends with different people. Lack of confidence is a barrier to my integration. At school my teachers liked me, and I could easily make friends. But at the university, I don't feel like people like me. Maybe it is just the adult way of treatment, which I don't understand. So the main barrier to my integration is lack of confidence in myself, which is the result of a negative attitude.

When I asked Mayana about possible ways of solving her problems and helping her integrate, she explained that she neither blamed her professors nor her peers.

> The problem is actually more serious than we think. It is the result of all of those terrorist attacks. That is why Europeans don't like Muslims, and they think all people who have anything common with Muslims are the same. The only people that I blame are fundamental Islamists. They are to blame four our un-integration and mistreatment. At my own institution, I think that I need time so that people can know me. The good thing is that the institution gives us the opportunity to present our culture, and that really helps. At the end of this academic year, I will be giving my presentation. I think cultural presentations can be helpful. I also think that I should be more communicative. My communication skills are better now, but still I need to open up. We'll see what happens.

As mentioned above, Mayana's institutional environment did not promote her integration. On the contrary, due to the unequal treatment she received from her

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professors and sometimes peers, Mayana felt a lack of confidence, which stopped her from approaching her own professors and communicating with local students. Mayana also mentioned that she did not go out with her friends either, which could also be considered as an obstacle toward her integration. When I asked Mayana about the steps her educational institution should take to promote her integration, she replied:

> The population of our university is multicultural. There are students as well as professors from different parts of the world (with fewer professors than students, of course). And among those students there are many immigrants. I told you about the cultural presentations that are held. I think those can be helpful. I also think that for our integration to be smoother, the university curriculum should incorporate subjects related to immigrants—their issues, problems, and hardships. That way European peers will know more about our lives, and it is very possible that the treatment will change toward the better. I think it is an important step that my educational institution should take to support our integration.

Mayana's perception of higher education in Europe.

When I asked Mayana about the Bologna Process and the main principals behind that policy, she explained that she did not have any idea about it. I explained to Mayana the general idea of the policy, and then we discussed the aspects of higher education policy which had a positive influence on her overall studies. Mayana asserted that access to technology was very important for her because it enabled many students to conduct online research, to sign up for online libraries worldwide, and find articles related to their topic of interest. Another thing that Mayana was happy about was the opportunity for receiving scholarships. Mayana was the second student I interviewed in Germany who

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was happy about the financial support provided by the German government. She explained that the support would allow many immigrant students to have access to higher education all over Germany. Another important issue was that students studying Psychology had opportunities to participate in internships related to their field of study from the first year of their schooling. Mayana mentioned that it could have a positive influence on her professional development. Also, as Mayana indicated, het institution offered classes in the German language for those immigrants who did not have sufficient fluency in the language.

When we discussed the potential negative aspects of higher-education policy with Mayana, she thought that it lacked classes related to different cultures, which would help Europeans have more detailed information about other nations, their cultures, traditions, and so on.

> I think that if there were classes about different nations, then they would be of benefit to me as well as other immigrant students. Also, it would be good to have something related to religious education. I am not talking about me, but there are many immigrant students that believe in Allah, while Europeans do not accept Islam, because there are so many bad things happening all over the world because of Islamist extremists. The German government has undertaken some steps toward promoting Islamic education, but I don't think that many institutions offer subjects related to Islamic education. If Europeans knew more about Islam, they would understand that in reality it is not a very bad thing being a Muslim. Another important thing I want to let you know is that there are no places where Muslim students can pray. Believe me there are many students who still remain true

followers of Islam, and at certain times during the day they need to pray. Because the institution does not have any designated areas, many immigrant students just leave the institution and never come back, which is not good. I think those are the main techniques that have the potential to make the integration of immigrants better and smoother. The bad thing is that the extremists are Muslim, but not all people belonging to Islamic faith are extremists. Off the top of my head, I think the things I mentioned would be beneficial. Otherwise, the overall environment in my institution is not bad. It is just that people don't know me and immigrants like me very well. And the main problem is that higher-education policy does not encourage people to learn about us.

Overall Mayana thought that education was accessible, especially with financial support from the German government. When I asked Mayana whether she participated in decision making, she was quite surprised. Mayana was not aware that she could participate. She mentioned that if she could participate in the faculty decision-making processes, it would enable her to also voice her own problems related to her education.

Interpreting Mayana's data.

Mayana's data suggested that her family went through numerous changes, not only in its identity but also on a societal level. After her family immigrated to Iraq from more or less democratic Armenia, Mayana's parents became religious and started following all of the rituals and traditions of Islam. Another important thing that data revealed was about the family's finances. Mayana's family did not have major financial problems in Armenia, but in Iraq, the family began to face financial as well as political problems.

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It was obvious that Mayana's parents had an influence on the development of her religious and on her social identity. Despite the fact that Mayana's family became true followers of Islam, her parents continued to encourage the interaction of their children with other nationalities. Mayana, while residing in Iraq, followed Islamic traditions as well. She wore the *hijab*, practiced religion, attended Mosque services, and enrolled in a religious school.

The data showed that her family immigrated to Germany in 2002 mainly because of the harsh political and economic situation pertaining in Iraq. Immigration did not immediately solve the problems of the family. The data led me to believe that her family faced financial as well as adaptation and integration problems in Germany. The family struggled with finding an apartment and finding jobs, and their inability to speak German made their communication with the German population complicated.

Moreover, the data revealed that Mayana saw her own integration as tied to changing herself. She gave up practicing Islamic rituals, she learned German at school, she opened up her communication skills and tried to communicate with German children. Mayana tried to wear clothing that was similar to the ones that Europeans wore. She thought that her being a Muslim could serve as an obstacle for her integration into German society. Once a proud Kurdish lady, she now tried to avoid questions related to her national and religious identity. The data provided by Mayana made me believe that she was not just trying to integrate, she was also trying to assimilate with German society.

The data on Mayana's education suggested that she was happy with her choice of profession. Overall, she liked being a student at Frankfurt am Main. Despite the fact that

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Mayana was a hard working student, the data indicated that Mayana was not well-integrated into the student population of her institution. Mayana was sometimes mistreated by the professors and the local students tried to keep a distance from her. Mayana mostly interacted with other students with an immigrant background among whom were also Kurdish students. Mayana avoided speaking Kurdish at her institution, making German the dominant language. The data on Mayana suggested that her institutional environment did not promote her integration into the student population of her university or into society in general. On contrary, the unequal treatment she received from her professors and sometimes by peers created the feeling of insecurity and a lack of confidence in Mayana, which, in turn, made Mayana less integrated.

Looking at data, I also noticed that Mayana did not participate in decision-making processes, and she did not voice her problems. The data further revealed that, despite the fact the higher education policy did not employ techniques promoting the integration of Muslim immigrant students, it did promote access to education, in the form of, for example, technical equipment, research possibilities, internships, and financial aid from German Government.

Finally, the data revealed that European higher-education policy could better play the role of an integrator if: it integrated Islam and culture related subjects into the curriculum, which could promote the knowledge of European students about different cultures traditions, nationalities as well as religions; it set aside special prayer areas for Muslim students, so that they could pray at certain times during the day, which would make them feel more accepted and integrated.

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Said's case study.

Brief overview of identity in Lebanon.

Lebanon can be described as one of the Middle Eastern states, where identity as well as nationhood are hard to define. To explain this in more depth, Larkin (2011) pointed out that there has always been a struggle between East and West for the ownership of Lebanon's identity. Larkin (2011) explained that,

> Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Maronites, Sunnis, Druze, Shia, and Greek Orthodox have all fought, bled, and died to secure a modicum of community and security. Throughout this confusion, a unique political system arose, wobbled, and finally collapsed in a spasm of violence of identity and nationhood. Ultimately, this system was unsuccessful because it did not seek to illuminate or alleviate the fears, goals, and beliefs of each community. (p.8)

There were two main religious groups in the country: Christians and Muslims. Cities all over the country were also divided according to religious affiliation. Thus, one part of the city was occupied by Muslims and the other part by Christians. The population of Lebanon was quite diverse, meaning that the legal residents of the country belonged to various nationalities, such as Phoenicians, Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, Palestinians, and so on. Maroon (2013) asserted that,

> According to Zalloua, Lebanon already had well-differentiated communities with their own genetic peculiarities, but not significant differences, and religions came as layers of paint on top. There is no distinct pattern that shows that one community carries significantly more Phoenician than another.

International Religious Freedom Report-Lebanon (2001) stressed that religion has always been a very sensitive political issue. There were different Muslim sects all over the country and different denominations of Christians. Thus, this type of division made it extremely complicated to identify the dominant religious group in the country. As International Religious Freedom Report-Lebanon (2002) indicated that,

> Because the matter of religious balance is a sensitive political issue, a
> national census has not been conducted since 1932, before the founding of the
> modern Lebanese state. Consequently there is an absence of accurate data on the
> relative percentages of the population of the major religions and groups. (p. 11)

Ethnic background was another complicated topic but at the same time an important aspect when talking about Lebanese identity. As mentioned before, there was a mix of cultural, ethnic, as well as religious groups which have lived in the territory of present-day Lebanon for more than 6000 years. In the 7th century, invaders from Arabia occupied the territory of Lebanon. Maroon (2013) mentioned that,

> The question of ethnic identity has come to revolve more around aspects of
> cultural self-identification more than descent. Religious affiliation has also
> become a substitute in some respects for ethnic affiliation. Generally it can be
> said that all religious sects and denominations comprise many different ethnic
> backgrounds, and that clear ethnic boundaries are difficult to define due to
> common conversions and inter-faith marriages. (p.67)

Language was another issue which complicated the definition of Lebanese identity. Due to the country's multiculturalism as well as influences from Western European countries, the languages spoken in the territory of Lebanon, were diverse.

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Arabic was the dominant language which the majority of population spoke. A recent study by Hamdan (2014), however, showed that the Arabic language was losing its popularity.

> Another issue in Lebanon is linguistic diversity. On first sight this seems to be something positive. But as an article of Al Akhbar shows, the neglect of Arabic in favor for English or French is rooted in ideological reasoning. This phenomenon has advanced to the degree that Lebanese children are no longer proficient in their supposed native tongue of Arabic. As a consequence the majority of the discourse defining their national identity is not available or accessible to them. The issue at hand is whether or not they consider themselves 'Arab' or not. (p.14)

Hamdan's (2014) study revealed that many people who resided in the territory of Lebanon, identified their language as Arabic, but they did not consider themselves 'Arabs.' There were also people who identify their native language as Arabic, and, when asked about their identity, identified as 'Muslim' and thus refused to be identified as 'Arab.'

What brought Said to Germany: Changes in identity.

Said's background.

At the time of the interview, Said was an 18 year old young man from Lebanon. He lived in Frankfurt Germany. He immigrated to Germany in 2010. He grew up in a middle class family in Beirut. His father was from Saudi Arabia and his mother was Lebanese from a Christian background. After she married Said's father, she had to convert to Islam. Said's father owned several shops in Lebanon, and his mother did not

work because his father did not see any need for her to work. So she had to stay at home and take care of her seven children. According to Said, Islam was very important for his family. All the members of Said's family strictly followed the rituals and traditions of their religion.

> That's what I saw and that's how I grew up. My father was the head of our family and he decided everything. If he told us that our religion was important, we had to trust him and do things the way he wanted us to. So, while growing up, I was just informed that I had to be religious, and there could be no arguments about that. Another important thing was that my father preferred that we play with Muslim children only. Though he married a woman who was a Christian, he did not want us to be in touch with people from other religious backgrounds. Also, my father thought that knowing other language besides Arabic was not very important because Arabic was the language of God.

> When I asked Said about his identity he told me that he used to consider himself as a Muslim from Lebanon whose mother-tongue was Arabic. He did not identify himself as Lebanese, because as he indicated, being Lebanese did not mean being Muslim and speaking Arabic. Said also explained that in his country, Lebanon, there were many people from different religious backgrounds and diverse nationalities.

> It is really hard to say how national identity influences one's understanding of my own identity or the identity of others. But I can definitely say that because Lebanon is a country of diverse nationalities and religious groups, I grew up knowing it, and I knew that people are not just Muslims. My interaction with non-Muslims was limited to a couple of children because of my father's restrictions.

When Said talked about his home country, I could feel lots of warmth and love in his words. He described Lebanon as "a pearl of the Middle East on the shores of Mediterranean." Said indicated that Beirut was divided into two major parts, and that he lived in the Muslim part of the city. Thus, his neighborhood was almost 100% Muslim. As a child he attended a public school that mostly Muslim children attended. As Said explained, there were some Christian students as well, but most of the time he interacted with Muslims.

> I had many friends. Almost 98% of them were Muslim. There were also Christians among them who were good, too. But I would not call them to my house and would not have a play date with them because my father was against it. I remember once some of my friends were at our house and one of them told my parents that I had Christian friends. My father got so furious that he did not let me have dinner. As far as my social integration and friends are concerned, I don't think I had any problems. I was a good student at school, and many students would turn to me for help. And later they would become my good friends. My friends liked me and I liked them. There were not any problems related to integration or making friends.

As mentioned before, religion was the most important aspect of Said's family's life, meaning that his father instilled Islamic values into his children. All seven of his children as well as their mother were required to pray, fast, cover their heads when outside, and follow all Islamic rituals. Despite the religious upbringing and the important role that Islam played for Said's family, Said did not feel the religion the way he was required to do.

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I never understood why I had to pray so many times a day. And I never understood why my sisters and mom had to wear the *hijab*, especially during summer, when it was terribly humid and hot in Lebanon. I just knew I had to do it to avoid making my father angry. I never used any religious signs myself, and I think if a person is really religious, it should be in his heart. Moreover, I think I was following the rules because I was scared of my father. So I can definitely say that, deep inside my heart, religion did not mean much to me. It was like a "have to do" thing and had nothing to do with me being religious. Now, after coming to Germany, many things have happened. I am not scared anymore, and I think if people do not feel like practicing religion, they should not. Here in Germany there is a Mosque, but I have never been there. But I know that there are many people who go to Mosque, despite the fact that they are in a Christian country and that there are no restrictions or rules that they have to follow. But, ultimately, I think that if they want they can practice it in Germany as well. It is just a choice they make. I just know that people should have choices so that they feel what freedom is.

When I asked Said about using religious signs to highlight one's religious belonging, Said mentioned that he never understood the reason behind that. Said pointed out that most of the terrorists, who killed so many people did use religious signs.

The clothing or any other signs do not make a person more religious. I think that the religion should be inside oneself. I always thought that people who wear the *hijab* are trying to advertise their being a Muslim. There are many people all over the world who wear Islamic clothing and pray several times a day just to show

off. In reality, they don't care about religion. I think the clothing or any other sign is nonsense. I used to wear such clothing myself, but in Germany I understood that I was doing it because my family wanted me to, and I stopped doing it.

Social identity for Said was his belonging to a group of people. He explained that, within that specific group, people need not be similar: they could have different tastes, belong to various races and nationalities, and have their own likes and dislikes. Despite that fact, according to Said, there were some aspects that unified those people.

To be a part of that group, I think I have to be able to communicate with every member of that group. Otherwise, I will not be accepted or integrated into that group. I think that in Lebanon, among my friends, I could not possibly tell you the difference between social and religious identities because I belonged to a group of people who were all Muslims. Things are different in Germany, meaning that the group can include Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus. And in Germany, religion is pushed back when it comes to social identity. Here it is important to have the ability to communicate and create common grounds for interaction. So that's why I give great importance to communication skills—the ability to listen to people and understand them, and to have respect toward the members of that group. For me, the most important aspect of my social identity is honesty with others, because without honesty and sincerity one cannot stay in a certain group for an extended period of time.

Immigration to Germany and shifts in identity.

Said's family immigrated to Europe in 2010. Said was only 13 years old at the time of immigration. The reasons that made the family immigrate to Germany were

related to the harsh political situation in Lebanon. Another important factor was that Said's father lost his business in Lebanon, and it was hard for his family to survive. The choice of the country was not random. As Said explained, his uncle's family was in Germany, so his father decided to join his brother and find better conditions for living. Said mentioned that the transition was and continues to be difficult.

> When we came here we lived in special camps. We spoke no German, which complicated everything. To tell the truth, my parents don't speak German even now. The conditions in the camps was not too bad, what was really hard to perceive was that we had gone from a middle class status to no status in Germany. We faced and still face many difficulties. The German government does provide financial support to immigrants, but with that support we can hardly make ends meet. We are a family of nine. First we came to Berlin, and then we moved to Frankfurt, where my uncle lives. We had a very hard time finding housing because everything is very expensive. Besides, not many Germans want to give their houses for rent to Muslim families. Another important issue is related to finding jobs. My mother does not work because my father does not let her learn German and work. My father does not speak German, but my uncle employs him in his small body shop. So everything is very complicated.

Said indicated that at the very beginning it was hard for him to be a school student in a German school because he knew no German. After he learned German, his grades improved and the teachers liked him as a student. Another problem, which Said indicated, was that his father, even in Germany, was trying to limit Said's interaction with local Europeans. At the very beginning, Said thought that the locals were looking at him as a

potential outsider or even an "enemy." Said observed that there were many silent prejudices as well as messages that he could feel, but he decided to ignore those because he wanted to integrate into German society. For that reason, he started to ignore his father's rules and make friends with Germans.

Said indicated that he noticed many changes in himself after immigrating to Germany. He specifically mentioned that he felt more human because he stopped obeying his father. He thought that it was the correct thing to do because he wanted to build his own life in Germany, make Christian friends, learn foreign languages, and in general make his own choices. He noticed that his social identity had changed in many ways. He found himself in a new, diverse society where every single person had respect toward the other person. In that society, religion, nationality, or ethnicity did not play a role. What played a role, according to Said, was open-mindedness, open-heartedness, and respect. So Said tried to learn the attitude and the habits of the locals to feel himself a part of German society.

> I reside in a community where there are not many immigrants. It is a very tiny neighborhood with mostly educated people. They all seem nice to me. They asked me about my nationality, and I told them I am Lebanese. They replied that we have great tasting food, which made me happy. But I am not sure what they think of my other family members. My parents and my siblings still practice Islam, and I am not sure if Germans like that. Moreover, my family strictly follows all the religious and cultural habits we used to have in Lebanon. I speak Arabic at home because my parents don't speak any other language. When I am outside, I speak German. I like German, it is a powerful language. I don't practice religion here,

and I am so happy about that, despite the fact that I have a big conflict with my father around that topic in line with other topics. When I am outside, people cannot guess that once I was a Muslim. See, I look European. I have blue eyes, my skin is white, and I don't use any religious signs to make people aware of my religion, because I think it makes no sense. I can say with confidence that I have no religious identity here because I don't feel like having it.

Said mentioned that he made many German friends. Moreover, he indicated that his circle of friends included youth from different ethnic backgrounds. He told that it was not hard for him to integrate into his circle of friends but that, at the same time, it would not be correct to say that he was fully integrated into German society. Overall, Said thought that every single European should be proud of his or her ethnic background because he thought of Europe as a territory where one could feel freedom.

You know in Christian parts of Lebanon, there were many people who had lots of freedom. So I definitely make comparisons with Germany. The Christians of Lebanon did not have any problems. They could do whatever they liked. They could even have Muslim friends. The same is true here in Germany. The point is that, in Lebanon, my family had many restrictions for us. And I know that most of Muslim families in the territory of Lebanon are exactly the same way as my family is. Otherwise, Lebanon is not a country where one should be Muslim, speak only Arabic, and practice religion as much as possible. There are many things in Lebanon, which are similar to things in Germany [smiling]. I just could not make use of those things back there because I had only one choice: obeying my father.

Said's experiences with European education.

Said at Frankfurt Am Main.

At the time of the interview, Said was a first year student at Frankfurt am Main. He was a student of philosophy. Said asserted that he liked to read books as a child. At the same time, he was always fond of finding the meaning of the books that he read.

> So when I grew up, I decided to choose philosophy because I am sure that it will help me to understand life better. I don't know how helpful it is going to be for my future career. I never thought about it, but I think that philosophy is everywhere, in everything that is around us. Besides, you know that there are many famous philosophers who were Germans. This makes things even more interesting and exciting.

Said explained that, as a first year student, he did face many problems, especially during the first months of his attendance at the institution. He emphasized some of his professors, mentioning that they changed their attitude toward him after finding out his country of origin.

> There was a class presentation. We were sitting around a table, and we were presenting ourselves. I said I was Lebanese. Suddenly, the professor stopped me and started thinking out loud: "So your name is Said, it means you are a Muslim, you are a Muslim from Lebanon." I told my professor that I was not Muslim, but I don't think he cared because he told almost all his colleagues about my religion. After that incident, I felt that some of the professors changed their attitude toward me. I feel like the professors don't treat me the same way as other students. I feel very nervous about that, and I am doing my best to change the way they treat me.

After that incident, I felt like some German students who used to talk to me
started avoiding any type of contact with me. I feel a very negative vibe sent
toward me from some German students, which upsets me. A couple of those
students even told me that I should head back to Lebanon before I manage to kill
any Europeans. I just don't understand why. I am not a Muslim; I am not a
terrorist; I hate what happens in Europe too, and if given a chance I would fight
against terrorists. But people don't believe anyone who is a Muslim or used to be
a Muslim.

Said indicated that despite the existing prejudices toward him, there were many
professors who were very helpful. He mentioned that he always felt free to approach
those professors, because he was confident that they would help or advise him. Said
noted that he made friends mostly with German students, and he was happy about it.

Though there are some local Europeans that don't want any contact with me, I can
still make friends with my German peers. They are really nice to me. They help
me out and support me when I need help. We go out together frequently. Despite
the fact that there are many cliques in my institution, I can be a part of a German
group, and this makes me feel integrated. If I am not asked questions about my
ethnicity and home country, no one can tell that I am not European. I try to
behave like Europeans; I wear the same type of clothing; I eat the same type of
food; and I listen to European music only.

Said explained that being integrated for him meant not being differentiated from
Germans or other Europeans. According to Said, there were two important things for him
at the time: being a good student at the university and being accepted by the wider society

and integrated into it. Said mentioned that, if he could not integrate, it would not make any sense for him to stay in Germany.

I think that I still have to overcome many obstacles in order to be fully integrated. For example, the unequal treatment by my professors and some peers makes me think that they are trying to somehow hinder my integration. The problem is I can't fight with them, though I am doing my best to prove to them that I am not a bad guy. As soon as I manage to change their attitude toward me, I think my integration process into my educational environment will become easier. If all the professors treated me the same way they treat other non-Muslim students, people around them would be influenced and would not try to avoid contact with me.

Said mentioned that many immigrants, especially those from a Muslim background, were trying hard to be integrated; at the same time, Europeans did not know those people who were trying so hard to become members of their society. So, Said thought that the university needed to incorporate mandatory classes for all students, which would help students understand who those immigrants were the reasons behind their immigration. Said added that those courses could also have a cultural component, which would facilitate the understanding of immigrant Muslims' ethnic background.

I am sure there are many more ways to help immigrants integrate better. I just know one thing for sure. If immigrants have trouble integrating into their own institutional environment, they will also have problems integrating into wider society. Right now, my institutional environment is doing both: it allows me to make friends and integrate into my circle of friends, but at the same time that integration has its own limits, which means that the institution, at this point in

time, does not really promote my full integration. I told you I have some German friends. We frequently go out together, and I get to know friends of friends. But I can't say that I feel comfortable with all of them because I feel like they don't really want me to be there.

When I asked Said where he felt more integrated, inside or outside his institution, he mentioned that he was more integrated inside the institution because of his friends. Moreover, he explained that, despite being integrated inside the institution, he did not feel that the university and its environment encouraged his integration into society at large.

> Unequal treatment bothers me a lot. When I was attending my secondary school, teachers seemed to be very kind and encouraging. Here, I face a different picture, which is full of obstacles. It's like that game called "Prince of Persia" where I have to overcome many hardships on my way to integration.

Said's perception of higher education in Europe.

When I asked Said about German higher educational policy within the framework of the Bologna Process, he mentioned that he did not know many details related to the policy.

> I know that it is related to the unification of the European higher educational system, and I have heard that the degrees we receive will be valid in many countries which signed the policy. And also one of my German friends told me that it is not fully implemented in Germany. I really like the idea that my degree will be accepted in Italy for example. Maybe after graduation, I will make a decision to move to Italy and work there. Another important thing is that I have access to a very rich library, which widens my knowledge of Philosophy. I have a

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very good professor who teaches us logic. She showed many web-sources which we could use to get in touch with our colleagues overseas and interact with them. Also, we have many opportunities to participate in internships and obtain practical knowledge. For example, I would like to participate in a teaching internship when I enroll in a Master's degree program, which I am planning to do. Also, I will be attending a conference in Austria for young philosophers. I could find the conference opportunity through those web-sources that my professor showed us. I think all those things have a really positive influence on my overall studies.

Said mentioned that he knew about existing student councils. He was also aware that the students enrolled in those student councils could participate in decision making processes. Said was not enrolled in the student council of his faculty, because, as he told me, one of his professors did not provide him with a letter of recommendation to become a member of the council.

It is negative and bad that I cannot voice my problems. I know many students who solved major problems related to their education through student councils. I hope that soon I will be enrolled as well, which will allow me to share my problems with the university administration. I think if I do so, my problems will be at least partially solved. Another negative thing, at least for me, is that I was not able to apply for a governmental scholarship which would support my educational activities. When I found out about the existing opportunities, it was too late to submit an application. Overall, I think that it is a great thing to have a scholarship for Muslim students. The bad thing is that those scholarships have deadlines, which are very strict. I would like them to have a rolling deadline, so that

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everyone could apply. There is another thing about the scholarship I want to share with you. It would be better if the scholarship was designated for immigrant students in general. I am from Muslim background, but I do not consider myself Muslim, which means if I want a scholarship I will have to misinform the government about my religious views.

Said mentioned that overall the university atmosphere did not promote integration. There were many student clubs which organized group activities for students, so that they could be involved in team work and go out and do things for the community. Said mentioned that what hindered integration was more on the individual, personal level.

I think that there are people that just hate Muslims. Since those people are local Europeans, they try to put pressure on everyone and change their attitude as well. Sometimes they succeed in doing this, which is very pitiful. I think that some aspects of European policy on higher education could be changed for not only immigrant students' benefit, but for the benefit of all. I have interacted with many immigrant peers and asked them questions about their problems. Some of them told me that the existing curriculum should incorporate classes about immigrants so that everyone can find out about the causes of immigration. Otherwise, many people, especially the older generation, think that Muslims are in Europe to terrorize locals. It is not true, and you can't blame the entire religion. Also, I know that there are many professors who left their jobs in their own countries and came to Europe seeking better life conditions. So it would be good for German universities to hire more professors with immigrant backgrounds, so that the overall university population can come to a point of equilibrium.

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Overall, Said thought of education as accessible. He mentioned that the changes applied by the government, which made education free-of-charge, gave many students an opportunity to become part of the higher-education environment. Also, Said emphasized that all classrooms and libraries were technologically well-equipped, and library materials were always updated. Said also liked the fact that all students, especially those who had financial issues, could participate in online conferences and open discussions.

> Not many countries in Europe, especially Eastern Europe, have those opportunities. Germany does, and despite the hardships, I am happy to be a part of the German higher educational institutions. I know I told you that I have integration issues. I perceive that I can't blame only professors. I have to work on myself as well, to prove the contrary. I am optimistic. I think things will change for the better.

Interpreting Said's data.

Said was a young man from Lebanon who grew up in a strict family headed by the father. He realized that the development of his identity was fully influenced by his parents, more specifically his father. His father, a Saudi Arabian shop owner, married a Christian woman who converted to Islam. As Said's data showed, he grew up in the Muslim district of Beirut in a middle class family. The family strictly followed the rules set up by the father. The father, being himself very religious, forced family members to respect and follow Islamic rituals and traditions. That is how Said's religious identity was developed.

The development of his social identity was also strictly controlled by his father. Said could interact with only Muslims, limiting himself to only a couple of Christian

friends, whom his father did not favor. His father was not fond of Said learning foreign

languages either, because he considered Arabic the most important language of all,

calling it the language of God.

Said data showed that he liked Lebanon, and he talked about his country with

respect and warmth. Despite the multicultural and multi-religious environment of

Lebanon, Said could not widen his circle of friends because of the rules and restrictions

set forth by his father. As the data made clear, Said himself was communicative and

open-minded. He liked his friends, respected them, and tried to be honest with them,

because he believed that society could accept people only if those people were honest and

respectful toward that society.

Further, the data revealed that Said's family immigrated to Germany because of

the harsh political situation in Lebanon. Life after immigration was not easy for the

family. The data also suggested that Said's family showed indifference toward integrating

into German society. They refused to learn German and interact with the locals. The only

person that worked in the family was the father, who found a job in his brother's body

shop.

Moreover, the data clarified that, despite the existing restrictions, Said did learn

German and make friends among his schoolmates. He seemed to be happy to have friends

from different nationalities and religious backgrounds.

The data revealed that after immigration, Said underwent major changes in his

identity. He learned German, became more open minded, and made many friends at his

secondary school. Said no longer wanted to obey his father's rules. He no longer

followed Islamic traditions or consider himself a religion person. Said had the goal of

becoming a full member of German society, despite the conflict with his parents. The shifts in his identity can mean that Said wanted to assimilate with German society.

Said liked his major field of study, philosophy. Moreover, despite the hardships that the student faced, he could make friends and felt more or less integrated into his social circle. The data showed that Said had German friends who he hung-out with outside the university. Said preferred to speak German most of the time.

Said, like other interviewed immigrant students, faced the problem of unequal treatment by some of his professors, and he blamed his Muslim background for that. At the same time, he found many of his professors helpful, supportive, and approachable.

Integration seemed to be Said's life goal. Thus, Said tried to behave like the locals did: he wore similar clothes, ate the same food, spoke German most of the time, and so on. Said wanted to become a full member of German society and not be differentiated from Germans.

Said found his higher educational institution a good place to study because it provided him with access to many opportunities, which could potentially promote the enrichment of the students' knowledge. Another important point that the data revealed was that, by making education completely free of charge, the German government gave access to all students from all backgrounds who wanted to continue their education. Despite the positive aspects, Said found some negative issues in need of attention: he complained that he was not able to enroll in the student council, participate in decision making. He also cited unequal treatment of students by professors as very difficult.

Said did not blame the educational policy for the unequal treatment he received at the hands of some of his professors. According to Said, this unequal treatment was not a

result of bad higher educational policy; on the contrary, it was an individual level response. At the same time, Said thought that higher educational policy did not promote immigrant students' integration, either. To solve the existing problems and to promote immigrant student integration, Said suggested incorporation of culture-related subjects into the general curriculum, where problems related to immigration as well as immigrants could be discussed and locals could get to know immigrants and their challenges. Said also suggested hiring immigrant professors in order to promote diversity not only among students but among professors as well.

Sciences Po University, The Middle Eastern and Mediterranean Undergraduate College of Menton, France

I conducted the third series of my research interviews in Menton, France. Many Sciences Po students expressed willingness to volunteer for my project. I talked to all of them. Most of them had interesting stories to share. First, I held a group conversation, asking general questions about their lives in France and in their institution of higher education. Several of the approximately seven students had interesting stories to tell, so I talked to them individually. Two out of seven students were from Egypt, one was from Turkey, and another one was from Lebanon. Because I had already interviewed students from the mentioned countries and my goal was to have students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, I chose students from the following countries: Yemen, Algeria, and Morocco.

Jhoka's case study.

Brief overview of identity in Yemen.

When we discuss identity in Yemen, we should think of tribes that have lived in the territory of Yemen for centuries. Thus, according to Mulinez (2011), a very common response to a question about identity in Yemen was: "I am a citizen of Yemen." The citizens of Yemen, when describing their identity, usually associated it with the tribe to which their ancestors belonged. The tribal identifications made the country less unified or even not unified at all. Leaders and politicians have tried to eliminate these tribal divisions by introducing the concept of "Yemenis" or "Yemenese." Mulinez (2011) explained that despite the introduction of this concept, many people residing in the territory of Yemen still preferred their tribal identity because they thought that it would help them to preserve their tribal culture.

As Ghazaryan (2009) explained, most of the people residing in Yemen were Arabs of different ethnic backgrounds, meaning that Yemen hosted not only people from the Arabian Peninsula, but also from East Africa, and even the Middle East. The official religion of the country is Islam, and most of the country's population are Muslims. Jews, Christians, and Hindis were representatives of a very small religious minority population.

The Islamic faith determined the behavior of most Yemenis and even temporary visitors to the country. Yemen was one of the countries which strictly followed Islamic rituals and traditions. Salafism has become one of the most popular means of the Arab uprising. Thus, according to Helfont (2012):

Like other forms of Islamism, [Salafism] is a revival movement that calls for the

return to a purified Islam. Unlike other Islamists, however, Salafis completely

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reject modern political systems and ideas. Most non-Salafi Islamists, despite their use of Islamic idiom, infuse political ideas that originated in Europe into their ideologies. Thus Iran is an Islamic "Republic"; the Muslim Brotherhood speaks the language of "democracy" and "human rights"; Hamas and Hezbollah rail against "imperialism." Salafis, on the other hand, insist that their creed is based solely on the Quran and the example of the Prophet Muhammad. Since none of those concepts and terms is found in the Islamic (or Christian or Jewish) canon, Salafis discard them. They argue, quite unabashedly, that a republic is by its nature anti-Islamic; that women and religious minorities are not equal to Muslim men; that democracy is a Western heresy, and so forth. For those accustomed to the intellectual contortions of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi arguments can be oddly refreshing. There is no need to decipher their rhetoric or peel back the political spin. They say what they think, and unapologetically. (p. 1)

Adult women could not walk outside without the *hijab*. They had to wear a long and baggy dress that covered all parts of the body. It was considered better if women cover their faces as well. According to Rahjid (2010), if women disobeyed these rules and went out without the *hijab*, they could be taken to court, fined, imprisoned, or even physically punished. Punishments could sometimes be harsh. Yemeni women were not allowed to talk to unknown men in the street, even if asked a question. Moreover, married women could not hold the hand of their spouse when walking down the street. Women were not allowed to make decisions on their own. They always had to be obedient and asked permission from the main male figure in their family.

Rahjid (2010) explained that the religious law was less strict for Yemenis men. The men usually wore browns and a turban, but it was not a requirement, and they could change to ordinary pants and a shirt. They should not talk to unknown women. Men were allowed to punish their wives if they thought they have been disobeyed. Again, the punishment could reach the level of physical abuse. The decision maker in general and especially in the family was the Yemenis man.

What brought Jhoka to France.

Johka's background.

At the time of the interview, Johka was a nineteen year old female from Yemen. She had been residing in France for three years. Jhoka grew up in Sana'a, the capital city of Yemen, in a lower class family. In Yemen, her father worked in a small grocery shop, and her mother was a housewife, busy raising Jhoka and her 13 siblings. Johka's family could hardly make ends meet. According to Jhoka, the main value in her family was religion.

> My parents never valued education. They did not really care if we went to school
> or not. Our neighborhood was full of poor children, and most of them did not go
> to school. But we had to learn Arabic, because it is the language of God, and that
> was the reason we attended school. In the evenings, we would all get together and
> read the Quran. My parents thought that the Quran was the only education we
> needed.

As a Child Jhoka was taught that God was important. Her father was very strict, especially toward the females in the household. Johka's mother, sisters, and Jhoka, herself, had to obey whatever the father said. The father would not let his daughters have

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many friends. Moreover, it was strictly prohibited for Jhoka and her sisters to interact with the children of the opposite gender. When I asked Jhoka if she had ever interacted with people other than Muslims, she responded in the following manner:

> I could not even interact with the neighbor next door. If I wanted to talk to someone, I had to have my father's permission first. As children, we did not even know that other religions existed. There were not many foreigners in Sana'a. Even if there were, we did not really know about them. As a child, all I knew was my family, religion, and a couple of female friends. Everyone else was considered an "other" for me.

When I asked Jhoka to identify herself, she told me that she was an Arab woman from Yemen from a Muslim background. Jhoka explained that being from Yemen was really important for her.

> I think that if someone is Muslim, Yemen is one of the best countries to practice our religion. We have strict laws about religion. We have to follow all religious traditions. So, when I think about my national identity, I immediately think of being Muslim, because there are not many people in Yemen from different religious backgrounds.

Jhoka did not talk much about her home country. She just mentioned that it was too religious and that the laws were strict. Jhoka also indicated that, after residing in France, she was able to compare Yemen and France and come to the conclusion that there was no freedom at all in Yemen.

> Yemen is a different country. I don't think that Europeans can live in Yemen, especially if they are females. If you don't mind, I will bring an example. An

adult woman cannot travel alone to Yemen because many bad things can happen to her. There are many people in Yemen who do not like Christians, and if they find out that an adult woman is in Yemen without her husband, they can do many bad things. Another thing is that there are many Muslim countries which do not have very strict laws regarding clothing. Yemen is not one of them. Even foreigners have to wear the *hijab*.

As mentioned before, Jhoka did not have many friends because of her father's restrictions. She explained that even the friends that she had were her first cousins because her father would not approve interactions with non-family members. Jhoka could not answer whether she was integrated into her circle of friends because there was no circle of friends.

Jhoka explained that she was raised according to the Islamic faith. Islam played an important role for the life of her family as well as her own life. Jhoka thought of herself as a religious person. She mentioned that praying was important for her because after praying she would feel purified. Also, Jhoka indicated that fasting was another important ritual that she had to follow.

I never use alcohol. I do not even know how it tastes. The same with pork. We think that pork, alcohol, and smoking are not healthy and that unhealthy things are against the will of God. Another important part of my faith is attending religious services and praying, and I still follow those traditions whether I am in France or in Yemen. The same with clothing: I wore the *hijab* in Yemen with my long gown, and I still do so in France, and I don't care if people don't like it. The only problem is my institution. It does not seem to accept me the way I am.

Jhoka had a hard time defining the meaning of society. She saw it as a group of people whom she could approach and interact with. She explained that, in Yemen, society for her was the members of her family, ruled by her father.

Well, as you have noticed, it was easy for me to describe my religious identity. But it is really hard to talk about my social identity because I think I have never been a part of a society, a society with its real meaning. I told you that back in Yemen my interactions were limited to a couple of friends, which I am not sure if I can consider a society. If so, then society are people who accept you the way you are and who share your interests. My friends and I had the same interests, so I think that is how society looks. You are asking if there were any specific factors that influenced the formation of my social identity. I can say that my father would not approve of my friendship with non-Muslims, and I have realized it as I have gotten older. So I think it would be one of the factors—or, more accurately, "restrictions"—that has affected the formation of my social identity. Also, I was allowed to interact with females, only. That might be another factor. As to aspects of my social identity that are important for me, I would say that I was really sincere with my friends back in Yemen, and I am trying to be the same way with my friends in France.

Immigration to Europe and shifts in identity.

Jhoka's family immigrated to Europe in 2012. The reasons that made her family immigrate were economic. Life in Yemen was hard. Jhoka's father could not earn enough money for his family. So they decided to immigrate to France. The country choice was not random. Jhoka mentioned that his father's friend had immigrated to France 10 years

previously, and her father had decided to follow his friend. Another important thing that made Jhoka's father choose France had to do with the fact that Jhoka's grandfather was born in France. The French government issued permanent residency to people who have a French citizen among their first family members.

Transition was and still is difficult for all of us. You know that I have a huge family, and in order to survive my parents have to work. My father does not speak any French, and neither does my mother. None of them work. We are under financial support from the French government. You understand that they don't pay lots of money. First we arrived in Paris and lived in a dorm type place. Then we moved to the French Riviera, Nice, where life is really expensive. We moved to Nice because my father's friend was there, and he promised he could help with a job. My parents are not trying to learn French, which I don't think is good. Another problem was to find an apartment for all of us. We had to rent two apartments. First we could not find anything, so we had to stay outside for a week or so. Then we found two tiny apartments, but the owners did not want to rent us those apartments. The apartments are in a community where many immigrants from different Muslim countries live. We also have French neighbors, who are not friendly at all. After my father talked to them and paid them some money, they agreed. In general, I don't feel like people like us. They can see we are Muslims, and now when they know that we are from Yemen, that fact complicates things even more. There is so much prejudice against us. Sometimes people just say out loud: "Go back to your country and never come back."

Jhoka mentioned that she started her schooling right after they arrived in Nice. She went directly to the 11th grade. Schooling was not easy, either. She could not speak any French, and she did not have any friends. Students did not want to interact with her. It was really hard for her. She explained that there were a couple of teachers at school who were really supportive toward her and who helped her with her classes. After Jhoka learned French, things changed for her. She started interacting with French children and even made friends with several of them. According to Jhoka, she felt that some children did not want to talk to her.

> I first thought that it could be because I did not speak any French. After I learned French, it was the same way. Some children just would not even pay attention at me. Eventually I realized that it was because I was Muslim. I think their parents thought the same way as my father: they did not allow them to have friends other than Christians.

Jhoka explained that after immigration to France, the hardships her family faced completely changed her outlook on life. She realized that if France was to become her home country, she needed to be more open minded, more approachable, and communicative. Jhoka also realized that if she wanted to have success in her future life, she needed to be educated. Jhoka's parents were not really supportive of Jhoka's initiative to continue her education. But it did not stop Jhoka. Language was not a barrier any longer, and she had good grades at school, so she decided to advance her knowledge.

> Most of the time I try to speak French, especially now that I am in school. Back in Nice, I was speaking French as well with my siblings, so that they could learn the language. I know my parents did not like what I did and what I do, but this was

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my only choice. My parents have not given up any of the habits we had back in Yemen. They still attend Mosque, and they pray during prayer times. My Mom and my sisters cover their heads and wear loose clothing. The same with my father. He is as strict as he used to be, and he has not changed even a bit. Socially, I can tell I have changed. Despite the existing restrictions, I made several friends, mostly from different Muslim countries, but there are also a couple of French friends. I communicate more. I look at life differently: now I can see that there can be other nationalities and religions around me. I still practice religion, though. Maybe it is not that intense as in Yemen, but I do my best to pray on a timely basis. I follow the food-related rules, though I know there are many people among my Muslim friends that don't follow any rules any more. Also, when I am outside, I usually wear pants and shirts, but I do cover my head. Nowadays, after those horrible attacks in Paris, many things have changed. The local population does not like Muslims, and it is clear. But I do not want to give up my religion.

Jhoka mentioned that she did not consider herself integrated into French society. She almost did not have any French friends. There were only a couple of French people among her friends. Jhoka thought that, without French friends, her integration would be even more difficult. She said that she wanted to consider herself European and, most importantly, a part of European society.

Due to the differences in culture and value systems between Yemen and France, Jhoka thought that she needed more time to be able to integrate into French society: "I have already changed, and I am working on myself to become more sociable and open minded, but I do not think I can give up my religion."

Jhoka's experiences with European education.

Jhoka at Sciences Po.

At the time of the interview, Jhoka was a first year student at Science Po, Menton. She moved to Menton with her two older brothers and sisters to continue her education. Despite the fact that her parents did not support the children's decision, they were able persuade their parents and explain that without education they could not make a living in France. At the time of the interview, Jhoka and her siblings resided in dorms belonging to the institution.

Jhoka was enrolled in a one-year undergraduate Program specializing in French. The main goal of the program was teaching French to immigrant students who aimed to continue and obtain higher education degrees at Sciences Po. After finishing the French language program, Jhoka wanted to continue her studies in the field of Middle Eastern studies. Jhoka found the subject field very important. She thought her extensive studies of the Middle Eastern landscape and politics would be beneficial for her future career.

> There are so many important shifts in the Middle East and I think that the subject
> field I have chosen will be very beneficial for me in the future. I am hoping to
> find a job in a state organization with an orientation toward politics. I am very
> much interested in the Middle East. To have a more in-depth understanding of
> what in reality is going on in that region, I think I should get an advanced
> knowledge of Middle East in general. I just really need to master my French.
> There are so many words and word combinations that I still don't understand. The
> program that I am enrolled in teaches us all the specifics of so-called political

vocabulary. For now, class wise, it is not really hard for me to be a student in this institution. But there are some other things which make it hard for me to be here.

Jhoka explained that she often did not feel comfortable with either her professors or her peers. In spite of the fact the French language program was designed for immigrant students and most of the students enrolled in the program were immigrants, she felt a negative attitude toward herself.

> I feel like an outsider. Other students come from different parts of the world. In my own group there are only two Muslim students; the others are all Christians from different parts of Europe. They also want to learn French in order to continue their studies here. When I first entered the class, everyone realized that I am a Muslim. Some people talked to me; the others did not even pay attention to me. Those who talked to me seemed to be a bit sarcastic about the fact that my head was covered. I don't wear my Yemeni clothing here. I wear pants and a shirt to cover my body, and when I go to the institution I usually cover my head. As soon as I am inside the institution, I have to take off my head cover because it is considered a religious sign and there is a strict law about religious signs here in France. It was so offensive. The professors do not seem to make fun of me, but when they talk about Islam, they say so many negative things about my religion. Sometimes two other students and I try to interrupt and explain that Islam is not so bad, but they don't let us talk. The problem is I have only four professors in this program and three of them have a very negative attitude toward me. So I can approach only one of my professors. She teaches French grammar and she is very

nice. She is not Muslim herself but she is married to a Palestinian. But overall I feel that negative vibe coming from every part of the classroom.

Jhoka mentioned that she interacted with the other two Muslim students and two non-Muslim students from Slovenia. Jhoka indicated that she had noticed many cliques in her institution. She mentioned that there were many Muslim students in the institution, and she never saw them hanging out with Europeans.

When I asked Jhoka a question about how she saw integration, she explained that for her integration was the feeling of being an "insider" and not "outsider." Integration was really important for Jhoka. She saw France as her future home, and she wanted to be a lawful part of French society because, otherwise, she would not be able to call the country her home. She thought that her integration needed to start from her institution of higher education, where, at the time of the interview, she did not feel integrated. She saw her religion as the main obstacle to her integration. Jhoka did not want to give up her faith though.

> I know that people don't like me because I am a Muslim. Especially now people consider Yemenis as their potential enemies. But they don't want to understand that not all Yemenis are terrorists and killers. They just think of all of us the same way. They think we are detrimental to France. But the problem is I can't change myself. At least now I don't think I should give up my religion in order to become integrated into French society. If French people are to accept me, I think they must accept me the way I am. Even if I live here for 20 more years, I can't become French because I am a Yemeni born in Yemen. I also think that the problem is not in me only; the problem is also in the French people. If they did

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not want us, why did they give us the right to be in this country? If they did, then they need to know more about us. Maybe having more information will help them stop the terrorists and at the same time treat innocent people better.

Jhoka thought that her difficulties with integration into her institutional environment directly influenced her integration into French society in general. She explained that, because she could not interact with French students and make friends with them, she did not know many French people. Jhoka mentioned that having French friends would help her know more people outside the institution, which would have a positive influence on her overall integration process. Because Jhoka did not have many friends, she would just go to her dorm room after classes and study there. She told that she rarely went out, even with her Muslim friends, because they just did not ask her out.

I think that my institution could do many things to support my integration. First of all, I think it would be good for my professors to learn more about immigrants in general and Muslim immigrants in particular, so that they could understand that our status makes us very vulnerable. If professors changed their attitude toward Muslim immigrants and made it more or less positive, then that attitude would reflect on students as well. And I think in that case I would be able to have French friends. We would hang out together, go to different places, and get to know other people. I think that's how I could become more integrated. I think there should be some informative classes for locals, where they could learn more about Islam and Muslim immigrants and understand that not all of us are scary.

Jhoka's perception of higher education in Europe.

Because Jhoka was a freshman at Sciences Po, she did not know much about the Bologna Process. All she knew was that the main goal of the policy was to unite the European higher educational system under one umbrella. She explained that one of her siblings told her about the policy and its flexibility. Jhoka liked the idea of having a diploma that would allow her to transfer her credits to different institutions of higher education in Europe. Other than that, she thought that there were numerous things which had a negative influence on her studies.

> I think that the educational policy does not really influence my studies in a positive manner and, right now, I don't see any prospects that would help me to advance my future career. In this institution, everything is very expensive: housing, food, and books. But the most expensive thing is the tuition, at least for people like me. I do want to continue my studies and advance my knowledge, but given this tuition I think I will have a hard time doing so. For the French language program, I was lucky to find a scholarship from a Middle Eastern organization, which agreed to pay my tuition for this year. I am not sure if I will be able to find money in order to continue my studies. I applied to some scholarships here at Sciences Po, but the advantage was given to French students. I say this because I know several Muslim students who applied for the scholarship and were rejected as well. You told me about the decision-making possibilities within the Bologna Process and the participation of students in it. I have not participated in any decision making, and I am not able to tell anyone that I have problems. But I am sure that many students, especially French students, participate in decision making and change things for their own good.

Jhoka mentioned that she did not feel that the educational policy promoted her integration. She mentioned that, along with the negative attitude from her professors and peers, the policy and the laws of the country did not allow religious practices inside the institution. Jhoka pointed out that, because she was used to covering her hair all the time, she felt uncomfortable being without covered hair among people. In agreement with other students interviewed within the framework of this project, Jhoka mentioned that her professors and peers often lacked information about other cultures.

Many Muslim students have to pray at certain times of the day. There are no accommodations in institutions of higher education in France where we can pray. I have heard that, in other European countries, they do have praying spaces for Muslim students. For that reason, many students leave the institution and discontinue their higher education, which is not good. Also, most of our professors are French women. It would be good to have Middle Eastern professors, too, who would understand us better and help their colleagues understand us better. After the Charlie Hebdo events, things got even more uncomfortable. During the commemoration, we all had to be "Charlie," but there were many Muslim students who did not want to do it. I know that some of them were excluded from Sciences Po. I would put it this way: If you are French, the educational policy influences the entire educational environment positively. French students do whatever they want. They have access to everything because they have the best scholarships. They don't have any problems related to religion or introducing their culture to other students. They don't feel like outsiders. But,

when it comes to Muslim students, I think many things should be changed to make the policy more beneficial for us as well.

Overall, Jhoka thought that education was accessible if a student spoke good French and had financial support to pay her tuition as well as living expenses in Menton. She mentioned the presence of technologically well-equipped classrooms, a good library, language learning labs, and so on. She indicated that it would be good to have a scholarship system that would cover the educational expenses of immigrant students, specifically. She also mentioned that it would be very beneficial if the institution introduced all the possibilities that were open to students (for example, participation in decision making processes). Jhoka thought that it would give all the students an equal opportunity to voice their problems and find possible solutions to those problems. At the time of the interview, Jhoka could not cite an example of any specific techniques used by her institute of higher education to promote her integration.

Interpreting Jhoka's data.

Jhoka, a 19 years old female from Yemen, arrived in France in 2012. Her data showed that she grew up in a lower class family in the capital city of Yemen, Sana'a. Her family followed all Islamic traditions obediently. She and her siblings grew up under the strict rules of her father, the only person in Jhoka's family who had a job.

The data showed that Jhoka's father had a great influence on the development of Jhoka's religious identity. Even in France, Jhoka followed all the rules and traditions affiliated with Islam.

Jhoka grew up in a family where education was not valued, which sheds light on her quite narrow world outlook. As a child, Jhoka did not know that other religions

existed. There were many restrictions on Jhoka's interactions and ability to make friends with other children. This explained Jhoka's closed-mindedness and lack of communication skills.

The data indicated that Jhoka understood what the meaning of religious identity was, at least on a general level. But Jhoka could not answer questions related to her social identity because she did not feel like she was a member of society. All she said about the meaning of social identity was limited to "being accepted by society."

After immigrating to France, Jhoka's family tried to preserve all possible Islamic traditions as well as existing restrictions and rules set forth by her father. For example, her parents refused to learn French; Jhoka's mother did not even try to find a job; and their interactions with the French were limited to a couple of people only.

Jhoka's data revealed that, despite the existing restrictions and rules, Jhoka learned French and also made new friends among other Muslim immigrants, including a few who were French. Jhoka also decided to continue her education because she realized that it could help her integrate into French society.

Jhoka wanted to become proficient in Middle Eastern studies because she thought that, in the current political situation, proficiency in the subject could prove beneficial for her future career. At the time of the interview, enrolled as a student in an advanced French language program, Jhoka did not seem to feel comfortable. The data showed that Jhoka faced problems related to integration and unequal treatment by her peers as well as most of her professors.

The data also suggested that Jhoka saw religion as the main obstacle to her integration. She obeyed the existing laws in France and did not use any religious signs

inside the institution, but as the data reveals, her professors and peers were aware of her nationality and religious background. Her professors spoke sarcastically about Islam, which hurt the feelings of Muslim students. At the same time, she did not want to change or give up her faith, thinking that if society was to accept her, then it needed to do so without making her give up things that were important to her.

Jhoka felt like an outsider in her own institution. She felt that other immigrants from Christian backgrounds were treated well and that the attitude of the professors toward them was much better. Jhoka interacted with several Muslim friends and two friends from Slovenia, who were Christians. Despite the fact that Jhoka could make some friends, she did not really hang out with them after classes; instead, she spent her time in the dorms.

The data revealed that Jhoka's lack of integration into her institutional environment influenced her integration process into society as well. It can be seen that the problem was not just in Jhoka or her religion. There were many aspects that the professors and local European students did not want to take into account. They did not really perceive how hard it was to be an immigrant in a country where the immigrant's religion was considered detrimental for the society.

The data further showed that Jhoka did not find that educational policy promoted her integration. She considered the tuition and living expenses too high for immigrant students. The data indicates that Jhoka perceived the scholarship money given to French students to be very important for all students. Moreover, Jhoka was not very well-informed about the Bologna Process. She had some general knowledge about the process and was aware that her degree could be flexible in other European countries as well. The

data made it clear that Jhoka did not know that she could be part of the decision-making processes and voice her problems within her institution.

Another important thing was that Muslim students did not have a designated space where they could pray. According to the data, many Muslim students just quit the institution because of restrictions related to religious practices.

Finally, the data indicated that despite the fact that Jhoka found the library, classroom technology, and language labs quite accessible, she thought that the curriculum lacked subjects related to culture, which would help local European students know more about immigrants in general and Muslim immigrants in particular and understand that being Muslim does not necessarily mean being a terrorist.

Khaled's case study.

Brief overview of identity in Algeria.

Algeria was a French colony for around 132 years. Right after Algerians gained their independence there were growing anti-French feelings throughout the country. There were mainly two camps among the population of the country: those who identified themselves as French and those who identified themselves as Muslim Algerians. Warid (2009) mentioned that,

> In 1936 Ferhat Abbas declared that "France is me," meaning that civilized Algeria is part of France, but he abandoned that route and joined the resistance later in despair. Some Algerians fought with the French against Nazi German forces in WWII and gained French citizenship along with a few who were accepted as part of a naturalization scheme. Thousands of Algerians fled the country in the

aftermath of the war, dubbed "Harkis": Algerians who collaborated with the French against the resistance.

Nowadays Islam is the official religion of Algeria. Most of the country's residents are Sunni Muslim. Islam penetrates into every sphere of the country's life. The social as well as individual identities of the people are strongly influenced by religion. It should be mentioned, however, that not all people are followers of Orthodox Islam. According to Warid (2009):

Following the revolution, various groups have tried to influence Algeria into becoming an Islamic Arab socialist state. A ministry has been set up in the Algerian government to take care of religious affairs. Whilst Islamic awareness is promoted in Algeria, religious tolerance is high in the country. People of all religions are afforded the right to worship and are respected. A Superior Islamic Council has been established in Algeria to encourage Muslims in the country to understand Islamic teachings as well as to consider the impact of religion on society. Islam plays a large political role in Algeria and three views can be identified. The first is the Islamist view, where Islam is regarded as all-embracing and must be part of every aspect of life, both private and public. The second is the secular view, where Islam is seen as a guideline allowing certain deviations. The third is the traditional view, perceived in the elderly and rural communities. (p. 54).

Despite the fact that the country has been independent from France for many years, Algerian culture has been connected to French culture. As Warid (2009) pointed out, the literature in Algeria was bilingual; the administrative offices mostly used French

as the main language. Many educated Algerians immigrated to France seeking better life

conditions, and they usually did not face many problems, in trying to integrate into

French society. Warid (2009) stressed that,

> The issue of Algerians who hold French citizenship remains a hot populist issue
>
> in Algerian politics: there is a feeling that they shouldn't be trusted or given high
>
> civil posts. Others, like the former Algerian prime-minister Abdelhamid
>
> Brahimi conjure that Algeria has been ruled by a "French cultural army" that was
>
> prepared and implanted before France left Algeria, and that this army keeps the
>
> country under French influence. (p. 76)

According to Benstead and Reif (2013), the way the citizens of Algeria identified

themselves, largely depended on which group they belonged to. Thus, in the case of the

Francophone group, people usually identified themselves as French-Algerians. People in

this group were usually representatives of the wealthy class. They were well-educated.

They usually studied Standard Arabic, but they spoke French. The traditions they

followed were mostly tied to the ones in France. People who belonged to the

Francophone group were not very religious: they could even be Christian. Moreover,

people in this group chose not to practice any religion.

Benstead and Reif (2013) also observed that, in contrast to the Francophone

group, people in the Arabophone group usually avoided speaking French or they did not

understand or speak French at all. They usually identified themselves as Algerian-

Muslims. Most of the time, they were representatives of the lower class and their

education was tied to the Quran and Islam. People in this group were followers of Islam

and were usually religious. They strictly followed all religious traditions and rituals.

What brought Khaled to France: Changes in identity.

Khaled's background.

At the time of the interview, Khaled was a 22 year old young man from Oran, Algeria. He had been residing in France for already 10 years. He grew up in a middle class family of medical doctors. His family never had any financial problems or issues in Algeria. According to Khaled, his parents always had a very democratic worldview.

> I think my parents always valued human freedom. My sisters and I grew up in a community where people from different ethnic as well as religious backgrounds lived. As my parents were really very open-minded, they encouraged our communication with the neighbors and their children. My father made us read many books about other cultures. I can say that, while growing up, I was very much attracted to French literature and art. As for religion—well, I can't say that my family was religious. We were considered Muslims, but we never really practiced it. We did not even speak Arabic. The language of my family was French and sometimes even English. My parents encouraged us to learn as many languages as we could, so that we could interact with people from diverse nationalities. So another value for my family was diversity.

When we talked about Khaled's identity, he said that he is French-Algerian. In general, Khaled did not like conversations related to ethnic or religious backgrounds, because he thought that human relations, in general, were above religions and nationalities. Being pure-blooded Algerian for Khaled meant limiting oneself culture-wise.

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In general, I think that the notion of nationality sets forth many limits for human

beings. We start being very nationalistic and we think of our countries as the only

best places in the world. I think we should respect all cultures. We live in an era

of globalization, so we should rock the borders and go beyond them and think of

ourselves as humans. I completely understand that not many people think like I

do, but at the same time I am sure that the way I think makes living in this world

easier. I certainly love Algeria, but there are many things in Algeria that I don't

agree with. For example, there are so many people back in Algeria that believe in

Allah simply because they have to obey rules. They do not have a choice. They

are completely brainwashed sometimes. I always tend to be beyond that type of

thinking, and I am trying to obey what my brain and heart tell me to obey. I grew

up in a multinational and multi-religious community, and I am happy about that

because it allowed me to know other cultures and communicate with them. I think

I am a wealthy and lucky person now.

Khaled indicated that as a child he had many friends and interacted with children

from different social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. According to Khaled, he had

many common interests with his friends, despite the social and ethnic diversity. Khaled

stressed that he was very communicative and never had any problems finding friends.

My house was always full of friends. After school we would all get together

somewhere. My parents liked having my friends around. My mom would always

cook for us. Accompanied by our parents, we would go out for a picnic or just to

do something together. I never felt like my friends did not accept me or

misunderstood me. It is because I am a very open person, and I like talking to people. My openness is one of the main things that I really value in myself.

Khaled explained that by birth his family was considered Muslim but no one in his family was religious. He explained that, as a child, he never heard his parents stressing the concept of religion. Khaled thought that every single person should have his or her own religion, make his or her own choices, and understand the personal meaning of right and wrong. For Khaled, religion was just a word that many people use without understanding the meaning of that word. He said that he never attended any type of religious service.

> I have never been to a mosque or church. I just don't want to be there. But to tell you the truth, I would really like to go to the USA one day and attend a service in an African-American church, not because of religion but because of gospel. I always liked the way African-Americans represented their faith because it always filled my heart with optimistic feelings. As to practicing Islam in a foreign country, I would say that again it comes to choice. If a person is truly religious, he should feel free to practice religion wherever he wants. But when this person sees that the foreign society does not really like his religion, or moreover, does not want him to use any religious signs or rituals, he should not do it and should try to respect the rules as well as laws of that foreign country; otherwise, he will always have the feeling of being an outsider.

Khaled saw society as a group of diverse people who maintained their individuality among the big crowd. Khaled thought that individuality made humans unique, and when those individuals came together, they formed a society, where any

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person could exist and survive. Khaled mentioned that social identity brought humans together based on their common interests, likes, hobbies, and so on.

> I think that if we keep our individuality in a big crowd of society, it will be easier for society to understand what type of individuals we are and to accept us the way we are. I am sure that among many individuals within a certain society, we can find people who have many things in common with us. Being accepted by a society is not an easy thing. So I think that our individuality should make it easy for society to recognize us. I think religious identity is very specific, and it is different from social identity. While in society there can be people from different religious background, religious identity brings those people together, who are under the umbrella of the same religion.

As Khaled indicated before within the concept of his own social identity, he valued his open mindedness as well his communication skills.

Immigration to Europe and shifts in identity.

Khaled's family immigrated to France in 2004. The main reason for their immigration was the unexpected death of Khaled's father. After his father passed away, life got really tough. Khaled's mother was the only one working and it was really hard for her to take care of her three children. Khaled's maternal grandparents lived in Menton, France, so they decided to go with his grandparents and seek better living conditions in France. Khaled said that the transition was not easy at all. His family faced many hardships in France. Though they had a place to live, his mother had a really hard time finding a job in France. She had to attend professional classes in order to be able to work at least as a registered nurse. Her mother's higher education diploma and medical doctor

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certificates were not accepted in France. So she had to pass exams in order to be able to find a well-paid job as a medical doctor. After attending two years of classes, his mother started to work as a registered nurse. She also kept studying for state exams to be able to work as a neurologist.

Khaled explained that schooling was not easy either. Despite the fact that he spoke French very well, he could not find friends among his classmates.

> At first everyone thought I was Muslim because I was from Algeria. I assume that my classmates' parents were against them interacting with an immigrant Muslim. I was a child and I could not really explain to them that religion did not mean anything to me. So whenever I was asked about my religion, I would spontaneously reply that I was Muslim. And I always felt the distance between me and my peers. Teachers were fine and supportive, but not having friends really hurt. At first I really wanted to go back to Algeria. But then I realized that it was not going to happen, so I decided to communicate with the children, no matter how big the distance was. It took me around three years to create a circle of friend, which to my surprise was not small at all. Things started to get better. I would go out with my friends, my teachers would take us out for field trips, and I loved it at school. Moreover, I was an excellent student, which was really encouraging.

Khaled said that, after immigrating to Europe, his sense of responsibility got better. He mentioned that, because he was the only man in his household, he realized that all the females in his family (his mother and two sisters) relied upon him in everything. He mentioned that it was the only major change he actually noticed in himself. Khaled

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explained that, when asked about his nationality and religion, he would refuse to answer, so that people would not start avoiding him because of his country of origin and religious backgrounds. Khaled said that he resided in a community of immigrants. He also said that he noticed a negative attitude from several neighbors who were French.

There are still some neighbors that don't know we speak good French. Sometimes, when I pass by and they see me, they will talk about how bad Muslims are and that laws in France should be changed in a manner that would make us go back to our countries. I completely understand their point, though. I know that there are many radical Muslims all over Europe who play a great role in the formation of those negative attitudes. Their behavior is terrible. They can kill anyone who does not accept Islam, which makes no sense to me. After the tragic events of Charlie Hebdo, things got even worse. French people see us all as one bad killer who came and conquered France. I don't blame French people, they have every right to think so. But there is one thing that they should take into account: People are different. Like I come from a predominantly Muslim country, but I am not religious at all. The problem is that French people do not really ask questions. As soon as they find out I am from Algeria, they make assumptions as well as conclusions, which do not correspond to reality. That is why I change the topic when I am asked about my nationality.

Khaled explained that, back in Algeria, their home culture was directly linked to French culture. Very often his mother would cook French food, they would celebrate French national holidays, and they would read French literature and listen to French

music. Nothing changed after immigration. Khaled's family kept the traditions in France as well.

Khaled explained that he was successful in making European friends. He went out with those friends. Often his friends would go to Khaled's small house and interact with his siblings, mother, and grandparents. Khaled indicated that, even though he loved France, he did not want to consider himself European.

> There are many things that I did not like back in Algeria. One of those major things was lack of freedom. Here in France there is lots of freedom, and all people have choices. While Algeria was a rule-of-religion country, France is a rule-of-law country, which is better, because law always protects humans. I can't say the same about religion. With all the positive things that I see in France, I still do not want to consider myself either European, or Algerian, or Italian, or whatever. I think that those are just tags attached to people. I consider myself a free person who is trying to find his place in this world, and I really hope to be successful in doing so. I am trying to integrate into French society, and I am trying to maintain in myself the Khaled I used to know, because that is my individuality. People might accept me or they might hate me, but I think by being myself I have more chances to gain full membership into French society. Thus, I don't think that my social identity has changed a lot.

Khaled's experiences with European education.

Khaled at Sciences Po.

At the time of the interview, Khaled was a third year student at Sciences Po. He was studying the political history of the Middle East. He found his subject field

interesting and full of career prospects, capable of opening up many career opportunities in future. Khaled planned to continue his advanced degree studies in the United States.

As mentioned before, Khaled had no problems at all communicating in French or in English. Khaled did not find it hard to study at Sciences Po in general, but he thought that there were important issues that needed a solution. One of those issues was unequal treatment of students by professors. Khaled observed that several professors treated local European students better than immigrant students, especially after the horrifying events of terrorism in France. He thought that many professors drastically changed their attitude toward students from Muslim backgrounds after the Charlie Hebdo events.

I feel like after the events in Paris, some kind of negative propaganda is going on. The main initiators of this propaganda are the professors all over our institution. They started talking about Muslim immigrants in a very negative manner. They don't like seeing any Muslim students in their classrooms. When there are extracurricular activities, Muslim students have problems accessing those activities. This type of attitude existed before, but it was not widespread. Now most of the professors are very much influenced by those events, and they want to blame everyone who is related to a Muslim country somehow. I have a professor who teaches political theory, and I used to approach him with questions. He was always very supportive. Now I feel like I should not talk to him because he seems to be avoiding me.

Khaled had many friends who were local French students. He also had Muslim friends. According to Khaled, despite the fact that the institution was multi-national, there were many cliques: European, Asian, Muslim, and so on.

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When I just came to this institution, it was not easy to find French friends. Many people would not want to talk to me, because they did not even try to know me. Everything started with a project, where I was a part of a French group. All the students in my group were French. We all were working really hard on the project. Among the students, there were couple of guys who hated me without any particular reason. They would always make sarcastic jokes about me, make fun of me, laugh at my haircut, and other things like that. Then one day one of the project group members told those guys to leave the group because they were not doing anything except being bothersome. And they left. I became really good friends with the rest of my group members. They also introduced me to some other French students. So now I have a satisfactory amount of French friends, and I am happy about it. Well, to tell the truth, it was not a problem for me to make friends among Muslims.

Khaled saw integration as feeling at home. According to Khaled, students should try to integrate into their educational institution's environment, because otherwise they will lose interest in attending the institution as well as their studies and profession. Khaled did not consider himself totally integrated. He thought that there were still many obstacles which needed to be overcome in order to become fully integrated.

I think that unequal treatment by professors can have a really bad influence on my integration because their opinion matters. Many local European students may follow their example and change their attitude toward me. It has not happened to me yet, but I know that some of my Muslim friends suffer from the change of attitude among their French friends. When I lose my friends, together with it I will

lose ties to French society, and my integration will become almost impossible. And if I am not integrated inside institution, I will not be able to integrate outside of it as well. The most important thing here is that I regain my professors' trust and prove that I am not a radical Muslim who came to France to kill people. Here, in this institution, we lack individual meetings with our professors. I think those meetings would be helpful and professors would get to know us better, if they talked to us individually. As of now, we don't have many opportunities to meet our professors face to face. Another important thing would be to hire a diverse group of professors, which would be helpful. I know many educated people from Muslim backgrounds who used to be professors in their countries and who are really proficient in the field of political science. Why don't they hire those people when the institution lacks professors of certain subject fields? If the local professors interacted with immigrant professors, they would probably change their negative attitude.

Khaled frequently met with his non-Muslim friends outside the institution. Often they studied together or went to entertainment sites and to just relax. He thought that the overall communication and interaction with his French friends had a positive influence on his integration into French society. According to Khaled, when people outside of the institution saw him among French friends, they accepted him and let him be part of French society.

I really don't know what I would do if not for my French friends. I am not saying that I am fully integrated because I still feel that many people just don't want me to be there, but I can confidently say that my friends support and help me in many

ways. They want me to know as many people as possible so that I can widen my circle of friends. Despite the negative attitude of my professors, I think that I am more integrated inside the institution than outside of it, because most of the students inside the institution know me and they greet me when they see me. As I said before, the major problem here is the professors. Their negative attitude can definitely have a bad influence on my integration into French society in general. With their attitude, they also make me feel uncertain, meaning that I am not sure if I should continue my life in this country, whether French society wants me here or not.

Khaled's perception of higher education in Europe.

Khaled was aware of the general concepts of the Bologna Process. He liked the idea of the flexibility of diplomas and students' ability to transfer credits from one university to another all over Europe and, even in some cases, to universities beyond Europe. Khaled thought that the Bologna Process had many positive aspects, such as the mandate that universities all over Europe offer multilingual classes, meaning that students from different nationalities would be able to have access to education all over Europe.

I think it is a very good idea to offer classes not only in local language of a given European state but also in English. Many students from different countries might not speak French for example, but most of the students have moderate knowledge of English at least. Another positive thing I should outline is that within the Bologna Process students have the right of voice, meaning that they can participate in decision making. This is very important. I am enrolled in a student body myself, and I can voice not only my problems, but also problems of other

migrant students, which later can be taken into consideration by the university administration. Also, all students have access to online resources. In case if we do not afford in person participation in international conferences or trainings, we can always do it online. Those are positive things, which can have positive influence on our careers.

When discussing the negative influences of Bologna, Khaled asserted the tuition as well as education-related high costs, explaining that many students were left behind because they did not have sufficient financial means to cover their tuition and other costs. Khaled emphasized that many students were not granted merit-based scholarships.

I feel like those scholarships are specifically designed for local students because, every time we apply, most of the funding is granted to French or other European students. I feel like it is some kind of segregation, and because of it many students leave the university and never continue their studies. Lack of funding definitely has negative influence, because without education we cannot advance in our future careers and will always have a hard time finding jobs. You know the job market is very competitive, and it wants more educated people. I have a part time job, which helps to pay my tuition. I work as a receptionist in one of the hotels. Also, I sometimes translate from Arabic to French and English. That helps to pay my tuition. I applied for scholarships, but I was never lucky enough to be granted one.

Another important thing that Khaled talked about was that he was not satisfied with the quality of education. He thought that four years for a bachelor's degree in the field of political science was not enough to produce more or less proficient professionals

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in the field. Thus, Khaled said that the main things he would change about higher-education policy were the following: Making scholarships more accessible to immigrant students, and teaching subjects that were mostly focused on political science, leaving out some general courses related to other subject fields.

It is really hard for me to say how the policy influences my integration, but as I said before, the opinion of professors matters and does influence the integration. Many immigrant students from Muslim backgrounds struggle because of those opinions. I think that to promote the integration of all students, there should be equal treatment of the entire student population. Also, to be able to reach the point of equality, I think the educational policy should encourage hiring professors from diverse as well as religious background. I think in case of having diverse population of both students and professors, the entire educational environment will change toward the better and will encourage integration inside as well as outside the institution.

Despite the problems related to integration and the unequal treatment by professors, Khaled found education accessible. He cited technologically well-equipped classrooms, the rich resources available through the libraries, and the importance of communication with peers abroad through technological means.

When we talked about the techniques used by the university to promote integration, Khaled mentioned the following:

I have talked about the bad attitude of different professors, and I know that it hurts because they are sending out messages of intolerance. I am trying to ignore those messages, but there are many students like me who are deeply hurt, and those

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messages hinder their integration. Despite this, the university often organizes field trips as well as community service activities for students. These definitely promote integration into French society, because we go out, we see people, we try to be helpful, and I think it is a working technique.

Interpreting Khaled's data.

Khaled's data showed that the 22 year old young man came from a very well-educated family. Khaled himself was educated and could speak three languages: French, English, and Arabic. Khaled grew up in family where human freedom was very important. Khaled lived in an ethnically and religiously diverse community where he was free in his interactions with children from different social classes.

Khaled was an open minded person who was and always had been socially well-integrated and with many friends. Moreover, the data revealed that Khaled did not like the concepts of nationality or religion because he considered those concepts to be obstacle for many people trying to integrate into society. He valued human individuality, because he thought that an individual in a big crowd would be recognized and accepted the way he or she in reality was. Neither Khaled nor his family were religious. According to Khaled, every person needed to have the right to choose, and he chose to be non-religious.

Further, the data on Khaled revealed that his family immigrated to France because of his father's sudden death. The main reason for immigration was economic, meaning that the family was trying to find better living conditions. The country of choice was based on the fact that Khaled's grandparents resided in Menton, France.

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Khaled's family, despite having relatives in Francs, faced many hardships in the transition period, which include: finding jobs, schooling and integration into school circles, rejection by neighbors, and so on. According to Khaled, those hardships rendered his feeling of responsibility even broader.

The data on Khaled showed that he was a good student and quite communicative at Sciences Po, despite the unequal treatment and bad attitude of some of his professors. He was doing his best to integrate. He tried to communicate with French students as well as students from other national and religious backgrounds without paying attention to existing national cliques inside the institution.

Khaled was trying to ignore negative attitudes and unspoken messages in order to be able to integrate better. Khaled tried to maintain his individuality and did not try to change his identity. He wanted people to know him the way he really was.

The data further revealed that for Khaled integration was the feeling of being at home, where everyone has respect toward one another. While talking about integration-related problems, Khaled did not personalize them; on contrary, he did his best to explain that he was not the only immigrant student struggling from mistreatment and difficulties with integration.

Khaled liked being a student at Sciences Po. He spoke of some aspects of European policy on higher education in a positive manner. Specifically, he valued the existence of multilingual classes for students from diverse backgrounds; he liked the idea of flexible diplomas; he felt happy that he could participate in decision-making processes and voice not only his problems, but also those of other immigrant students. He valued

very much the existence of online resources, which enable students to participate in online conferences and trainings.

The data indicated that Khaled found some negative aspects in European higher-education policy, including high cost of tuition and education-related fees; limited scholarship opportunities; lack of focus in the major field of study, affecting the quality of education; and lack of diversity in the population of professors, especially the lack of professors with immigrant backgrounds.

Finally, Khaled found education accessible, outlining the richness of the library, the technologically well-equipped classrooms, and the field trips and community service opportunities.

Amal's case study.

Brief overview of identity in Morocco.

It is hard to speak of ethnicity or identity in a country like Morocco. Intercultural marriage has always been common in Morocco, which means that no one in the country can claim to be pure Arab or Amazigh, a North African ethnic group also known as Berbers. Generally speaking, Morocco is a country of diversity. Identity in Morocco is often described as "shladathe," which means salad. When asked about their identity, people usually reply that they are Moroccan because even they do not really know whether they are Arab or Amazigh.

Morocco is a country where a foreigner can easily get confused. Females who belong to older generation usually wear the *hijab* and traditional Islamic clothing which covers their whole body. At the same time, their female children may wear European clothing, including shorts, short skirts, skinny pants and use lots of make-up. Chebbak

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(2012) mentioned that, despite the fact that Islam was the official religion of the country, Morocco was one of the Muslim states that had more or less democratic values. Thus, during prayer time, there were many Muslims on the streets who did not pray. Islam was more wide-spread among the lower class. People who resided in poor conditions in the suburbs of big cities practiced religion more often than people who belonged to the middle or upper class.

As Elboubekri (2013) pointed out, Morocco was a country of mixed cultures. In 1912, the country was divided into two main parts: Spanish and French. Those divisions influenced the languages the people in the country spoke. Elboubekri (2013) asserted that despite the Spanish influence, most of the people all over the country spoke French.

Multilingualism in Morocco has been the accumulative outcome of the various cultural and linguistic traces left by the European and Middle Eastern intrusion in the country. From indigenous Tamazight tongue, the natives of Morocco had to learn to live with new comers in the eighth century. Since then, Arabic had been established as the unifying language of the successive Islamic dynasties that reigned over the Moroccan throne, while Tamazight was always in the background. Such an unofficial bilingual state was disrupted at the beginning of the 20th century by the arrival of the European late comers. Among all these languages, French was the most ingrained language in the country owing to its status as the language of instruction in the Moroccan schools. After independence, the newly born nation initiated a language policy that intends to reduce the absolute sway of the French culture and language, and the recovery of what is thought as the national identity of Morocco. Against this backdrop, the new

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educational architects came up with the monolingual approach of Arabization

(Arabic-only policy) for the purpose of preserving the cultural identity of the

country and reconsolidating its alignment with the Arab world. (p. 60)

The Arabization, however, was not without consequences. While trying to make

the Arabic language the one and only official language in the country, the government

did not take into account the presence of a multicultural society in the country. As a

consequence, Arabic became the language of those people who belonged to the lower

levels of society, while French was wide spread among the rich.

Talk Morocco (2010), an online Moroccan source, explained that the country, in

general, was full of contrasts:

The gap between rich and poor is so apparent here. There are the biggest villas in

Soussi while there are shanties. And there is all this modern technology, but so

many people don't even have a shower installed or running hot water in their

homes… ("What is the Moroccan Identity," 2010)

Finally, Morocco is one of the Islamic states which has set forth as its priority the

protection of its ethnic, religious as well as cultural diversity.

What brought Amal to France: Changes in identity.

Amal's background.

At the time of the interview, Amal was a 20 year old female from Rabat,

Morocco. She grew up in a middle class family of school teachers. Amal's family did not

have major financial issues. For her parents, the education of their three children was

really important, which explains Amal's fluency in French, Spanish, English, and her

mother tongue of Arabic. Amal's family was religious, but her parents did not force the

children to be religious as well. The children always had the choice of being religious or not. Thus, Amal's mom always wore the *hijab* and traditional Moroccan dress, but Amal and her two sisters never wore the *hijab*. They always wore more European styled clothing. Amal herself did believe in God, but she indicated:

I am not a fanatic. It would not be true to say that I pray several times a day or attend Mosque. I just know there is God, and I believe in God. My family did not really instill in me religion. They always taught me that I should have the right to choose between being religious or not. What they instilled in me was the sense of responsibility and respect for all people no matter their ethnicity and religious background. Also, my parents taught me that I should be a sincere, open minded, and straightforward person in order to be understood and accepted by society.

When I asked Amal to identify herself, she said that she considered herself a Moroccan who was proud of her nationality. She said that the notion of identity in Morocco was quite different from the rest of the world because, in Morocco, it was hard to find a person who was pure Arab.

My national identity definitely helps me to understand my self-identity. I have many mixtures in me. The same is true of my country: it is very diverse, and I love it. You see, my maternal grandmother is Spanish and grandpa is Arab. My paternal Grandmother is French, and grandpa is a mixture of French and Arab. So I think that this helps me to respect and love not only the cultures that I have in my own blood, but also other people. I grew up in a community where many nationalities lived. I interacted with many children, and I liked them all. They were all my friends. The thing is that we never talked about our ethnicity because

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in our communication it was not really important. The most important thing was the respect toward one another, which made our integration into our circles of friends smooth and easy. My parents would always encourage my friendship with diverse children because they thought that it was the best way to know other cultures.

Amal's parents followed most Islamic rules and rituals. At the same time, they did not force their children to be religious, giving them the freedom of choice. Amal indicated that religion was important within certain limits, and it was a personal concept.

I think that every person has God in her or himself. I sometimes talk to God, and I feel some kind of relief. But again I am not fanatic, and I think that too much of anything will not do any good to people. As to practicing Islam in a Christian country, it very much depends on the country. I am in France right now, and I am aware that here the religion and its practice are separated from the State. So I think that all Muslim immigrants should respect the law in this country and practice the religion in their homes or elsewhere, in places specifically designated for religious practice. My mom stopped wearing *hijab* as soon as we arrived in France. But I know that she still prays, fasts during Ramadan, limits herself by not eating pork or consuming alcohol, and I respect her choice.

Amal stressed that society was where one had a strong feeling of respect and acceptance. For Amal her social identity was directly linked to sincerity and straightforwardness; otherwise, she did not think she would be able to be part of any society. She believed that social identity had nothing to do with religious identity because, in a society, there were people of diverse religious groups who needed to

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coexist, and when society accepted a person and let the person integrate, it did so without considering the person's religion or ethnicity important. Amal said that the diversity and freedom of choice in her country had a great impact on the development of her social identity.

> My parents never set forth limits. They always told me to have as many friends as possible, because by having many friends you get to know diverse personalities, which makes you ready for adult life. Also, one of the main things about myself is that I love diversity because it is colorful. In homogeneous society, you can never widen your worldview because most of the people, despite their individual diversity, live the same way, speak the same language, and in general belong to the same culture. On the contrary, heterogeneous society opens up your worldview and makes you see the world in different colors. So I grew up in that kind of diversity. I always had and still have respect toward any single person. I am open minded and I am not going to give up my sincerity.

Immigration to Europe and shifts in identity.

Amal's family immigrated to France in 2010. The main reason for their immigration was to provide their children with an opportunity for better education. As all of her family members were fluent in French, they decided that France would be the best choice for immigration. The transition, of course, was not easy. Amal's family arrived in France and had some problems related to becoming legal citizens of the country. In spite of the fact that Amal's grandparents had French citizenship, it took them almost two years to make their stay legal. In the meantime, the family resided in the suburbs of Paris. At first, they had issues finding a place to live because the apartment owners had

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prejudices and did not want to rent their apartments to newcomers from Morocco. Finally, they found a place to live in a very poor community, where mostly immigrants with Muslim backgrounds lived. According to Amal, there was not even a single French person in the community, and the main language spoken was Arabic. Amal mentioned that her family did not interact with the neighbors because the neighbors would not accept them. Amal mentioned that the Muslim neighbors did not like the more or less free values of her family.

Because they were not legal in the country, Amal's parents could not find jobs, so for a long time the family had to live just by using their savings from Morocco. Amal's father was able to find a temporary job in a construction, where he got paid a very small amount of cash, but it was better than nothing. After they legalized their stay in France, Amal's parents were lucky enough to find jobs in an elementary school.

Many Muslims say that it is impossible for immigrants to find a job which is well paid. For us the main problem was to fix our papers, after which I did not see any major obstacles for my parents in finding jobs. Another thing is that Muslim immigrants say that French people treat them bad, especially the newcomers. I think that it all depends on how the immigrants behave. French people—and not only the French, but all people—like educated immigrants because those immigrants can become good workers and citizens for their country. That is my experience. Maybe others have different experiences.

Amal mentioned that the schooling was not hard for her. She thought that she was one of those lucky students who could easily find friends and integrate into her own

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groups of friends. Her teachers were very supportive, and she could ask for their help any time she had problems.

Amal mentioned that, after arriving to France, she did not change much. She got to know French culture first hand. An important thing that Amal pointed out was related to her mother. She indicated that her mother felt that religion could become a major obstacle for the integration of the entire family into French society. Thus, she stopped exhibiting her belonging to a religion by not wearing the *hijab* and praying in public spaces. At the same time, while at home, Amal's family continued to follow Islamic rituals and traditions.

> Inside and outside the house, we speak French all the time, so people don't ask us questions or develop some kind of negative attitude toward us. When at home, we still follow our cultural habits. Moreover, we now have friends here, and when my mom cooks our traditional food, we always invite our friends over, so that they get to know our culture.

Amal said that her worldview on religion had not changed at all. She had respect for God, but she did not practice religion. As for her social identity, she thought that she had become more French.

> Now I think like the French and act like the French because I think that society will understand me better that way. I always say that I am Moroccan, but sometimes people think I am European, and I am not upset about it. There is nothing bad about being European. I have many European friends, and they never tell me that I am different from them anyhow, which indeed makes me happy. As to commonalities and differences between French society and Moroccans, I can

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say that it is just the cultural difference. Morocco bears an influence of Arabic and European culture, which makes it more diverse and interesting. French society is also diverse, but I cannot say the same thing about French culture, because I think French people are conservative and try to maintain all their cultural values without mixing those with other cultures. In general, I respect and love both cultures.

Amal's experiences with European education.

Amal at Sciences Po.

At the time of the interview, Amal was a second year student at Sciences Po majoring in Middle Eastern Politics. She thought that her profession was interesting as well as important, because Middle Eastern politics was one of the main areas of interest in the contemporary political world. Amal thought that her profession would be helpful for her future career. She planned on continuing her studies and getting a master's degree in her field of study. Amal hoped to continue her advanced studies in Spain. Amal moved to Menton alone. She shared an apartment with other students from an immigrant background, from Russia. Amal liked being a student at Sciences Po and thought that her hard work at her institution paid off.

I think if you study hard, your hard work will always pay off, and you will not face any major hardships related to education. My professors are good professionals, but sometimes I feel like their approach is very nationalistic. When you attend one of our classes, you will feel that mostly French students actively participate in class discussions, because the professors encourage them to do so. Also, professors seem to be more supportive toward locals. They answer French

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students' questions with more willingness than those asked by other students. Most of my professors asked me questions related to my nationality and religious background. When I answered them, they did not say anything, but I could tell from their facial expression that they did not seem to be happy. The only thing is that I am an excellent student, and they can't do anything to make me become a bad students. Whatever happens, I do my job.

Amal interacted with almost all students. She was communicative, and thought that students treated her right. She did not feel any prejudices, which made her feel accepted by the students. In spite of the fact that she successfully communicated with most of her peers, she noticed many cliques all over the institution, Muslims, Europeans, Asians, and others communicating among themselves.

I have not noticed any mistreatment from locals or even non-Muslims from other countries. But I am aware of many cases of people who have had communication and interaction problems because locals just won't accept them the way they are. I grew up in a multi-national environment, and Europeans know how Morocco is. Maybe that's why they accept me into their circles. My other guess would be that it is my communication skills and the desire of becoming a lawful member of French society that are strong enough to make me ignore mistreatment or racializing messages. Another thing is that I have no problem speaking French, I look very much European, and no one can guess from the cloths I wear that I am from a Muslim background. Those could be the other reasons they accept me.

Amal thought that integration was important even for internationals paying a long term-visit to a country. According to Amal, without integration success was impossible. Amal thought that she was quite integrated into her educational environment.

Most of the immigrants from Muslim backgrounds have a hard time integrating. I also feel mistreatment from professors and think that unequal treatment is one of the major obstacles that have the potential to hinder integration. There is just one point here that I would like to explain. It is absolutely true that many French professors don't like Muslims, and especially Muslim students, in their classrooms. But why care? Students must have the strength not to pay attention to that mistreatment and just go on, prove the contrary, and try to make as many friends as possible. There is one story I would like you to know. After the tragic Charlie Hebdo events in Paris, professors' attitude changed for the worse, and they all seemed to go into a state of alarm. One day I entered the classroom before it was in session. My professor was inside setting up a power-point presentation. I left my backpack and left the classroom. When I came back, the door was closed. I opened it and saw a very unpleasant scene. My professor was looking inside my backpack. I am not sure what she was searching for, but she explained that the remote fell behind my backpack, and she was taking it. It was terrible, but I did not do anything. I just ignored it. Other Muslim students would not ignore it. They would start an argument with the professor and get into trouble. I am trying to avoid troubles for the sake of my own self. That professor understood that I saw everything, but she would never think I would ignore what she did, and that upset her even more than the fact of me being her student. So I think that not

paying attention is the best way to overcome the obstacles toward integration. Unfortunately, many students from Muslim background don't want to ignore, and they keep fighting and keep their distance from Europeans.

Amal thought that institutional environment played a big role in as well as influenced immigrant students' integration into European society. Amal thought that if Muslim immigrant students felt segregated inside the institution, they did not try to get over that segregation or try to make local friends. What they did was become a part of the "segregated student group," made up of only Muslim immigrant students. Amal herself had many friends from various religious and ethnic backgrounds. She often went out with her friends and loved spending time with them. They often organized parties outside the institution, cooked their national food, sang their national songs, wore their national clothing, presented their culture, and so on. Those parties were usually open-air and took place in various communities all over Menton so that people in those communities could attend and get to know different cultures, taste some national cuisines, and so on.

> Those parties are our idea. We just got together one day and thought it would be so much fun to do something interesting in the communities where we live. We would get to know many people and people would get to know us and spend some good times with us. You see, our institution would really do a good thing organizing similar activities so that students from all nationalities would be involved and have the opportunity to present their cultures. It would make their integration easy. They would get to know other people outside the institution and do something fun and pleasant for their communities. And eventually people

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would accept them. But, for now, our institution unfortunately does not organize similar activities.

Amal's perception of higher education in Europe.

Amal knew about the Bologna Process and its main goals. She mentioned that she liked the idea of the Bologna Process as a whole because it allowed students flexibility all over Europe. Amal indicated that she also liked the idea of the three-tier system because it would give students an opportunity to get a bachelor's degree in one major filed and then continue advanced-degree studies in another. Amal thought that European policy on higher education had several aspects that could positively influence her overall studies. Specifically, she said that she could get a degree in one country and transfer her credits to another European country for a different degree. Another aspect of the Bologna Process that Amal thought was important was that it encouraged students' participation in decision making. Amal herself was a member of student body and actively participated in decision making processes. She indicated that her participation in decision making allowed her to solve many problems directly related to education in her institution. Amal also indicated the possibilities of international collaborations. She mentioned that those collaborations enabled many students to exchange knowledge with their peers internationally.

> I mentioned several positive aspects, and I would like to continue with this. It is very important to have visiting professors from all over Europe and overseas. And we do have them. It is very interesting to be part of their lectures. It is thanks to the Bologna Policy that renowned professors pay a visit to our institution and organize conferences and lectures for us. We get to know their perspectives and

learn different point of views, which has a very positive influence on our overall studies. Also, we as students, can take part in exchange programs all over Europe and study for 6 months or more in a different European country. This type of exchange programs help us become part of other institutions, get to know other culture, and make choices related to our advanced studies.

With regard to the negative aspects of European higher-education policy, Amal stressed the need for a better scholarship system. Amal mentioned that the scholarships needed to not be only merit based.

There are many students all over the institution, especially immigrants like me, who really need financial support to be able to pay their tuition and other educational needs. But most of the scholarships that we can apply for are merit based, and I have noticed that immigrant students are almost always left out. So we have to apply to different Middle Eastern foundations or foundations which support Muslims from Africa to be able to get scholarships. You know, I know many students that leave school because of financial problems, and they never come back to school. They go and find a job in a restaurant or a place like that so that they can make their everyday living. I also had problems and applied to a Middle Eastern organization and was lucky to be granted a scholarship. It covers all my needs. Tuition costs are very high. If the prices were lower, maybe we could find side jobs and pay our tuition. If I could, I would encourage the introduction of need-based scholarships as well, so that many students would benefit.

Amal also described that, despite the many visiting professors, the institution lacked diversity among its own professors because most of the professors were French. Amal thought that, along with the diverse student population, there should also be a diverse population of professors for the sake of equilibrium. Another important thing observed by Amal was that not many immigrant students were able to become part of the student body and voice their problems. She felt like there was some kind of segregation with regard to immigrant students from Muslim backgrounds.

> I can tell that there are only 5 or 6 immigrant students from Muslim background enrolled in the [governing] student body. But the institution is full of students like me. I don't know how that cannot become part of the decision making. I was told that because I am a good student, I can be part of student body. I cannot believe that there are only 5 or 6 good students with immigrant backgrounds. This institution has a big international population. There is a specialized course in the French language, but the French they teach has a political bias. So I think for international as well as immigrant students, there should be a course in the French language that would allow them to master the language and make the whole integration process easier. The problems I am talking about, I also mentioned and presented during the student body meeting.

Amal indicated that the institution did not organize community-service related activities that would encourage the active participation and integration of all students. Also, Amal thought that despite the fact that education was accessible, the institution was technologically well-equipped, and the library was always updated, there were many issues that had a negative influence on the overall educational environment of the

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institution. She specified the unequal treatment of Muslim immigrant students by French professors.

> I think that unequal treatment is one of the major problems. Many students regret that they came to this institution, and they are not even trying to integrate. Professors create a distance between locals and immigrants. I think the messages they send out make local students hate Muslim immigrant students. I tried to ignore those messages and found the strength in myself to go on and keep in touch with all my friends; otherwise, I would be completely lost. I encourage all students like me to ignore those messages and prove that they are not evil. They should interact with the French and all other students in order to integrate. Life will be pointless without integration.

Interpreting Amal's data.

Amal's data showed that she was a well-educated woman of 20 at the time of the interview, who grew up in an environment full of respect and love. Amal was from Morocco, a unique and multi-ethnic country with an interesting culture where people of various religious beliefs resided. Her background explained her respect toward various cultures as well as people of different nationalities.

The data showed that, despite the fact that Amal's family was religious, Amal and her two sisters were given the choice of whether or not they would be religious. All of her family members were religious, but Amal herself did not consider faith the most important guiding force of life. As a child, she never followed her mother's example and never wore traditional Islamic clothing. She never strictly followed Islamic rituals and

traditions. Amal thought that religious practice should have certain limits, especially if undertaken in a country with a different religion.

Amal's data suggested that she had her own individuality and an interesting formulation of identity. She looked first at her national identity and came across many cultures, which explained her multicultural groups of friends. She linked her social identity to sincerity and straightforwardness. She thought that the abovementioned features of her character helped her to be accepted by society.

Further, Amal's data revealed that the main reason her family immigrated to France was better education for Amal and her sisters. Life in France, especially the first couple of years, was not easy for Amal and her family. They faced hardships like finding appropriate housing, legalizing their stay in France, finding jobs, dealing with a Muslim neighborhood with prejudices of its own, and so on. Amal did not change much after the move. The only person who went through changes was Amal's mother, who came to the conclusion that exhibiting her Muslim identity would not be beneficial for her family.

The data also revealed that schooling was not hard for Amal. She was able to easily make friends and integrate into her school environment. Amal loved the whole process of education, which explains her excellent academic standing at Sciences Po where she was a major in Middle Eastern politics. Amal was very communicative at Sciences Po as well. She tried to ignore the negative attitude of her professors because she thought that the negative attitudes and prejudices that existed could hinder her integration into her institutional environment as well as French society as a whole. According to the data, Amal considered integration vitally important because she did not feel it was possible to reach the goals she set for herself without being integrated. Amal

did think that the educational environment could potentially have a negative influence on the integration of Muslim immigrant students and that those students needed to try to avoid the racializing and segregating attitude from their professors for the sake of their own integration.

The data revealed that Amal was involved in many community projects where, together with her friends, she organized various gatherings in different communities of Menton to present residents of those communities the cultures, traditions, and cuisines of different countries.

Further Amal was aware of several of the principals of the Bologna Process and found the flexibility aspect of the policy very important. She thought that European higher-education policy could have a positive influence on student academic life and education for the following advantages: credit transfer, participation in decision making, collaboration with peers from various countries, lectures by renowned visiting professors, and participation in student exchange programs.

The data revealed several negative aspects of European higher-education policy as well, which were the following: high tuition fees, merit-based scholarships accessible mostly by local students, lack of diversity among professors, lack of Muslim immigrant student involvement in the decision making process.

Finally, Amal ignored the negative attitude and unequal treatment doled out from professors. At the same time, she could see that many Muslim immigrant students suffered from that type of treatment and had major problems integrating not only into their educational environment, but into French society as well. According to Amal, institutions could do the following to promote the integration of students from immigrant

backgrounds: organize community service activities, encourage immigrant student participation in decision making, and introduce classes of advanced French language for students not yet proficient in the language.

Conclusion

In sum, in the above chapter of my research I discussed nine different narratives of students from Muslim backgrounds residing and studying in three different European countries: Armenia, Germany and France. My discussion showed that all those cases/narratives had various things in common but, at the same time, they were distinct and offered different solutions to voiced problems. In the chapter to come I analyzed the existing data by comparing and contrasting the cases discussed in this chapter, which helped me to answer my research question.

Chapter 5

Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, I draw upon a thematic analysis across cases to answer the following research questions:

1. As residents of a European country (Germany, France, and Armenia), how do Muslim immigrant students perceive and describe their experiences with social and religious identity, and changes in their identity?

2. As students in a European institution of higher education, how do Muslim immigrants describe their experiences with European education and integration into the European institutional environment and, consequently, into European society?

3. How do Muslim immigrant students perceive the higher-education environments of France, Germany and Armenia?

The cross-case analysis of the cases revealed the following:

Firstly, students, while trying to integrate into the societies of their host countries, noticed changes in their identities. Despite their willingness to integrate, there were some students among interviewed participants (e.g. Jhoka, Viola) who still were trying to preserve various aspects of cultures and traditions of their home country.

Secondly, the experiences of students in their respective higher educational institutions varied. Some students still found the entire integration process full of hardships, but they also realized the importance of being integrated. To make their

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integration smoother the students came up with the following suggestions: creation of diverse cultural and interactive student clubs in the campuses of the universities; incorporation of culture related subjects into the curriculum; possibilities of one-to-one meetings with professors.

Finally, students thought that educational policy should encourage and promote the following important aspects to make the integration of all students smoother: having professors from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds; encouraging participation of all students in decision making processes; and introducing need based scholarships.

Research Question 1

> **As residents of a European country (Germany, France, and Armenia), how do Muslim immigrant students perceive and describe their experiences with social and religious identity, and changes in their identity?**

In answering the first question of my study, I tried to clarify how student-participants perceived their social and religious identity in their home countries first. In doing this, I relied on descriptions of aspects like family background; family social status; factors that influenced the formation and the shaping of the identities of student-participants; students' perception of personal, social, and religious identity, and shifts in identity after immigration to Europe.

Specifically, I explored participants' perceptions and understanding of identity (self, social, and religious) in general, whether or not they saw any factors that might have influenced the formation of their identities, and how they saw changes/shifts in their own identities after immigration to Europe.

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The cross-case analysis of the first research question informed the way I addressed the second and third research questions, because the way participants perceive the concept of identity in their home countries sheds light on how they see shifts in their identity as they try to integrate into the environment of not only their respective institutions of higher education in Armenia, Germany, and France, but the societies of those non-Muslim European countries as well.

The concept of identity: What impacts the formation of identity.

In order to ground my argument regarding the concept of identity and the factors that impact the formation of identity, I referred to significant philosophical points of view that informed our general understanding of identity formation and factors that could impact the process of identity shaping.

The student participants of this study came from various Muslim countries, which possessed unique cultures and traditions. I interviewed students from Iran, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Algeria, and Morocco. These countries were different from one another not only in their customs and traditions, but also in terms of the continents they were located in. However, despite the differences among these countries, one important thing unified them: Islam. Many philosophers, such as Marx (1983), Durkheim (1995), Weber (1946), Goffman (1959), Butler (2004), and so on, asserted that religion often functioned as a social norm, exerting a strong influence over not only the formation of religious identity, but of the self and the social identities of the societies residing in a particular state. Thus, while interpreting the role of religion, Marx (1983) pointed out that religion involved a set of ideas which expressed material realities and influenced the formation of human identity in general. Moreover, Marx (1983)

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defined the idea of religion as "the opium of the people," mainly for people who are self-alienated. Self-alienation was related to people who withdrew or became isolated from their own environment. While talking about self-alienation, Hidayat (2010) explained that: "The social function of religion is no longer but an ideology, where religion distorts and masks the true reality of the world" (p. 1).

In contrast with Marx, Weber (1946) came up with a more optimistic view toward religion, asserting that societies created the concept of religion in order to make better sense of life as well as the world. Weber (1946) thought of religion as being powerful enough to make changes among the members of various societies and influence the development of social identities. According to Weber (1946):

> However incisive the social influence, economically and politically determined, may have been upon a religious ethic in a particular case, it receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, and, first of all, from the content of its annunciation and its promise. (p. 270)

The student–participants came from countries wherein Islam played an important role and had a strong influence on the development of identity in general.

Thus, the first student, Viola came to Armenia from Uzbekistan, one of the states of the former Soviet Union. I can tell from my own personal experience as a former citizen of one of the states of the no longer extant USSR that all over the Soviet Union the concept of religion was not common. Almost no one practiced religion in the territory of the Soviet Union. We were all considered just citizens of Soviet Union, and we were supposed to believe in the existing Soviet values. That type of thinking was instilled in each and every citizen of the USSR. Everything changed after the break-up of Soviet

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Union. People of different countries started practicing religion, attending religious services, following religious traditions, and so on. Uzbekistan was not an exception.

Yerkesheva (2004) indicated that Islam became one of the means of brainwashing people and redirecting the frustration they felt over existing economic and political problems. Yerkesheva (2004) pointed out that, besides becoming a "brainwasher," Islam greatly influenced the way people thought as well as the development of their identity in general. Religion could probably influence the development of identity, as my interviews showed but the student-participants of my research did not seem to be brainwashed by Islam. For some student-participants religion was a part of their life, for others it did not play a major role in their lives.

Viola was born and raised in Uzbekistan, and Viola's identity was shaped by the existing religious values of her home country. Viola's case showed that as a child, her father instilled Islamic values in her, and she did not have any choice but follow religious rituals and traditions. At the same time, she could still perceive the difference between social as well as religious identity, but as her data shows, religion was present everywhere. Viola tried to find peace and an escape through her religion because there were many problems in her household, including domestic violence. Credit should be given to Viola's mother, who helped Viola understand that religion was not the only shaper of identity. She instilled love toward education, art, and culture in Viola.

Viola saw many hardships as a child, but Ahmed, a student from Egypt, grew up in a middles class family that greatly valued education. Egypt has undergone and is still undergoing many changes related to politics as well regimes. Socially a predominantly Islamic state, Egypt is a country where many Christians reside. Despite the diversity in

religion, religious practices were quite strict and, according to Ortuno (2004), shaped the identity of Egyptian population. Martinez and Stowell (2007) pointed out that the educated strata of the Muslim population tended not to follow religious traditions and rituals. Ahmed was an exception. Despite the fact that Ahmed was from an educated family, he strongly believed that people should follow religious traditions, if they really believed in God. It should be mentioned, however, that for Ahmed religion had more of a spiritual character, and he did not think that frequent visits to the mosque or using religious signs made people more religious. Ahmed, like Viola, was able to distinguish between social and religious identity. For Ahmed, social identity was a group of people who had much in common with him. At the same time, Ahmed narrowed the circles of the society, outlining that it is just "group of people around me."

In contrast with Viola and Ahmed, Sasan, an Iranian student, had a completely different point of view on religion. Despite the fact that Iran was a country of fundamentalist religious practices and Iranian identity mostly was affiliated with Islam (Melik-Barkhudarov, 2013), Sasan did not think that educated people could possibly be religious. Sasan was from an upper class family of medical doctors. The formation of his identity did not seem to be influenced by the existing Islamic values in his home country. As a child, Sasan's parents encouraged his interaction with children from diverse nationalities and religions. In general, Sasan thought that the concept of nationality was just a way to label people, and did not seem to be fan of such labeling. As a non-religious person, Sasan did not talk about religious identity, saying that his family never practiced religion. He thought that social identity was a group of people to which he could potentially belong, saying that he could not possibly belong to a religious group of

people. While describing his social circles, Sasan included in the list his family members, friends, relatives, and friends of friends, but he left out those relatives who were religious.

Similarly, to Sasan, Erdi mentioned that being Turkish meant being Muslim. Erdi, a second-generation immigrant student from Turkey, did not consider himself a religious person, despite the fact that he grew up in a religious lower class family that lacked education and had great respect toward fundamental Islamic values. Erdi was born and raised in Germany, and according to him his visits to Turkey scared him because he did not think that Turkey was a country of free values. Erdi thought that Ankara was way too religious, and he did not want to go back there. Erdi did not think that being Muslim could have a positive influence on his integration into German society because he thought that the predominantly Christian Germans and Muslims are mutually exclusive.

Mayana was an extraordinary case who had gone through immigration twice. A Kurdish student herself, Mayana was born in Armenia and later, together with her family, immigrated to Iraq. According to Kuyumjyan (2001) Kurds were the largest ethnic group in the world that did not have a home country, and there were Kurdish communities all over the world with the largest in Iraq. The formation of Kurdish identity was largely influenced by the geographical position of the Kurdish homeland (Kuyumjyan, 2001). Thus, in Iraq, the shaping of Kurdish identity was influenced by the Arab conquest. Most of the Kurds residing in Iraq were Muslims. For Mayana, the formation of her religious identity was linked to her family's immigration to Iraq, where Islam was and is the state religion. Mayana's story showed that Islamic values in Iraq rendered her parents religious and then later influenced the formation of Mayana's religious identity as well. Despite the change in the religious views of her parents, Mayana's parents, similar to Sasan's parents,

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encouraged their children to interact with children from various ethnic backgrounds. In Iraq, Mayana also followed Islamic rules and rituals. Despite the fact that she had a hard time explaining what social identity meant, she thought that religious identity showed how people behaved in spiritual life while social identity was people's behavior in real life.

In contrast with the rest of the participants, Said came from a country where understanding the concepts of identity and nationhood is exceptionally complicated, Lebanon. Lebanon was a country where two main religious groups resided, Muslims and Christians. Said was a representative of the Muslim group. He grew up in a middle class family of a Saudi Arabian father and Lebanese mother who converted from Christianity to Islam for the marriage. Said's social as well as religious identity were greatly influenced and strictly controlled by his father. In contrast with Sasan and Mayana, Said was forced to follow Islamic rules and rituals, and his interaction was limited to Muslim children only, while Sasan as well as Mayana had a choice. Said asserted that even identifying himself was controlled by his father: "I had to be Muslim from Lebanon," because just being Lebanese did not indicate one's religious affiliation. Said thought that social identity was the ability to have sincere and honest communication with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

For Jhoka, religion played an important role. She grew up in Yemen, a country where religious law was very strict. At the same time, Yemen was a country where many tribes resided, and those tribes tried to preserve their cultures and traditions, which served as a reason for separations among people inside the country. According to Jhoka, usually the Muslims of Yemen, when identifying themselves, mentioned their religious belonging

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out loud. Similar to Said, Jhoka grew up in a religious family with a strict father who instilled religious values in his children. Jhoka understood what religious identity meant, and she thought that her family had had a great impact on the formation of her religious identity, but at the same time she found it hard to explain what social identity was because as a child, in contrast with Sasan and Mayana, Jhoka's parents limited her interactions with other children. She saw social identity as a "group of people with common interests."

In contrast with Jhoka, Khaled, an immigrant student from Algeria, and Amal, an immigrant student from Morocco, had completely different worldviews with regard to religious and social identity. Both of their home countries, Algeria and Morocco, were countries of diversity and contrasts, meaning that they each hosted people from different nationalities and religious backgrounds. Despite the fact that the state religion of both countries was Islam, many people had the opportunity and freedom to choose. Khaled and Amal, in contrast with Jhoka and Said, were given freedom of choice. Both were educated young students whose parents had not tried to impact the development of their religious identities. On contrary, their parents impacted the development of their social identity by instilling in them a respect for different cultures, religions, and education. Thus, Amal grew up in family where the mother figure was religious, but Amal, as a child, could choose between being religious or not.

The above discussion showed that both the country context as well as families could have an impact on the development of both religious identity as well social identity.

Changes in identity: Reasons behind identity changes.

In recent years, international immigration has become a common thing among various nations. People immigrate for different reasons. Some leave their homelands because they disagree with the state politics of their own country; others seek better economic conditions, and so on. No matter what the main reasons behind immigration are, it is not an easy thing for people to adapt to the various aspects of life in their new country of residence. It is a common thing for immigrants to face hardships related to adaptation, learning the local language, integrating into local society, and so on. While trying to become a lawful members of the local society, immigrants often go through identity changes. According to Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, and Louie (2002), the main reason behind identity changes was that immigrants felt disconnected from their own environment. They were unfamiliar with the cultures and traditions of their new homeland, which made them go through acculturation. As defined by Gibson (2001): "Acculturation is the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact" (p. 19).

While discussing the concept of acculturation among international migrants, Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001) mentioned the following dimensions,

1. Adoption of ideals, values, and behaviors of the receiving culture.

2. Retention of ideals, values, and beliefs from the immigrant person's culture of origin. (p. 495)

Bhatia and Ram (2004) asserted that the abovementioned dimensions were closely related to social, cultural, and religious identity. Identity was a major issue for immigrants as they tried to adapt to the environment of their new homeland (Bhatia &

Ram, 2004). Arnett (2000) and Schwartz (2005) pointed out that changes in identity usually affected young adults and children; the older generation tried to preserve the culture and traditions of their country of origin.

Adams and Marshall (1996) defined the role of identity in the following manner: "Identity functions as a self-regulatory social-psychological structure, in that it directs attention, processes information, manages impressions, and selects behaviors" (p. 432). Further, Serafini and Adams (2002) indicated that individuals adopted identities through imitation and identification, or experience, construction, and exploration.

Constant and Zimmermann (2012) in their research on shifts of immigrant identities mentioned that:

> The arrival of immigrants can amplify social challenges and both natives and immigrants can see their identities altering and evolving. Individuals in a country can be patriotic, nationalistic, indifferent, apathetic, or subvert and undermining. The openness of the people in the host country, their embracing of new cultures and their respect toward newcomers can play a major role in how immigrants react and how close they remain with the country of origin. The laws of the host country together with the ideals, the self-understanding and the foundation of the sovereign nation can also affect the identities of immigrants and natives at the individual level and at the nation-building level. (p.364)

Further, Constant and Zimmermann (2012) looked at various country contexts and asserted that, for example, in France, immigrants were the representatives of the country's former colonies, which meant that the immigrants were often fluent in French and had French citizenship, which gave them the same rights as local French people.

Constant and Zimmermann (2012) asserted that, despite being lawful citizens of France, immigrants often did not integrate into French society; they belonged to a lower social class and tried to maintain a distance from local French people.

While comparing French and German cases, Constant and Zimmermann (2012) indicated that Germany had strict laws on immigration, and the country did not grant citizenship to each and every immigrant. That explained why many immigrants in Germany were not politically represented and did not have the same rights as local Germans. Regardless of the differences in French and German immigration laws, most of the immigrants in both countries were badly integrated.

Ishkhanyan (2012) described Armenia as a paradise for immigrants, in the sense that immigrants were easily able to get their legalization paperwork done and become legal citizens of Armenia. At the same time, Ishkhanyan (2012) pointed out that Armenians were not used to multiculturalism in their own state, and it was really hard for Armenians to accept immigrants, especially from Muslim backgrounds, as legal members of Armenian society. That was one of the reasons why immigrants in Armenia had hardships integrating into Armenian society.

Shifts in identities.

In the following discussion, I explore what happened to the identities of the nine student participants as they tried to integrate into Armenian, German and French societies.

The reasons behind the immigration of the interviewed students varied. Some families immigrated to Europe for better economic conditions, others immigrated because of difficult political situations in their home countries, and still others immigrated

because the parents were seeking a better education for their children. The adaptation process was not easy. The families faced hardships related to finding jobs and places to live, legalizing their papers in their new homeland, adapting to the new culture, learning the local language, and most important trying to become part of the local society.

While going through the above mentioned hardships, most of the interviewed students underwent acculturation, or changes in their identities, or both. Most of the interviewed students did notice those changes and talked about them. The students indicated that those changes in their identities and worldviews had the potential to help them to better integrate into European society.

Thus, Viola, from Uzbekistan, immigrated to Armenia hoping that it would not be hard to integrate into a society which was once a part of the Soviet Union. But the entire adaptation process was not easy for Viola. Despite the fact that her grandparents were long-time legal residents of Armenia, giving the impression that Viola's adaptation process would be smooth, that was not the case. Viola was quite a communicative person back in Uzbekistan. She respected her own religion and was a loyal follower of the Islamic faith. She used to wear the *hijab* in her country of origin. After she arrived in Armenia, her communicative skills faded because she felt like an outsider among Armenian students at Yerevan State University. Viola did not seem to be integrated at all. She could not find common ground with the locals. First she thought that the main reason was her lack of fluency in the Armenian language. But she realized that the main reason behind her being an outsider was her religion. She started to change herself. Viola thought that both her religious and social identity had undergone major changes, but she did not consider herself a European.

In contrast with Viola, Ahmed did not feel like an outsider. It would be true to say that it was not easy for Ahmed's family to adapt to Armenian society and its culture and values, but Ahmed found in himself the power and did his best to succeed. Ahmed realized that learning Armenian was important because, besides being a key means for integration, the Armenian language would also facilitate his education and communication with locals. In contrast with Viola, who saw major changes in her religious identity, Ahmed mentioned that, in terms of religion, he did not notice any major identity changes, but at the same time he stressed that he had reduced his praying. With regard to his social identity, Ahmed noticed many changes, pointing out that his worldview had changed and he felt like he had become more flexible and free in his changes. Ahmed also indicated that the way he used to think and see things had changed. Ahmed, in contrast with Viola, was successful in making Armenian friends and thought that his friends facilitated his integration into Armenian society, yet he did not consider himself fully integrated.

Sasan, from Iran, was the only person among his other family members who came to Armenia. He moved for the education and decided to become an immigrant afterward. Sasan's responses during our interview were really surprising to me. I felt like Sasan had given up not only his religious belonging (although he had never been religious), but also his nationality. After immigrating to Armenia and realizing that it was not an easy thing for a person from a Muslim background to integrate into Armenian society, Sasan decided to change completely. First, he learned Armenian to be able to take mainstream classes with the Armenian students, and he stopped communicating with Iranians. Sasan, like Erdi, who tried to speak German most of the time, spoke only in Armenian to avoid

questions related to his nationality or religion, and if he was asked about them, he would respond with: "I am an Armenian citizen from a Christian background." Sasan was trying to change himself entirely in order to assimilate with Armenian society and overcome the problem of being rejected sometimes.

Erdi's and Mayana's cases were somewhat similar, in sense that both students found themselves going through major changes. Thus, Erdi was born and raised in Germany, and his parents instilled in him Islamic values. When already grown up, Erdi realized that his religion could be a great obstacle for his integration into German society. Moreover, he thought that he was brainwashed by religion and decided to give up everything related to Islam, including clothing, which, according to him, would make his integration into German society better. Erdi found himself in the middle of major changes. Beside shifts occurring within the framework of his religious identity, Erdi, similar to Mayana, felt that he was German (European) and did not want to be Turkish. So, when asked about his nationality, his response would be "German."

Similarly, Mayana, a Kurdish student, realizing that integration into German society could be harder for her if she preserved her religious traditions, decided to avoid the practice of Islam. She even changed her appearance to look more European and, similar to Sasan, avoid questions related to her nationality and religion. Her social identity went through changes as well. My personal experience shows that, in general, there is a tendency among Kurds to preserve their national identity, culture, and most importantly language. In contrast with that tendency and similar to Sasan, who learned Armenian, Mayana mastered German and tried to speak German only. According to Mayana, her social identity had also undergone changes, and her worldview had changed

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after immigration. She had become more open-minded, and her communication skills had improved. Similar to Sasan and Erdi, Mayana's actions were beyond the tendency to becoming integrated; she was another student among those I interviewed who wanted to assimilate with German society by changing her entire self.

A student from Lebanon who grew up to totally controlled by his Saudi Arabian father, Said found freedom in Germany. Once a youth surrounded by Muslim friends only, Said, similar to Mayana and Sasan, learned German, rarely spoke Arabic, avoided any type of religious practice, and tried to make as many German friends as possible. Germany, according to Said, was his new homeland, where he was trying to find "a new him," to be able to integrate into German society. Said thought that his integration would be easier with improved communication skills, friends from various ethnic as well as religious backgrounds, and the absence of Islamic rituals and traditions. Like Mayana and Sasan, the changes that Said underwent seemed to guide him toward assimilation.

Jhoka's case was different compared to other students like Mayana, Amal and Sasan. A student originally from Yemen, Jhoka experienced major changes in her social identity. While growing up in Yemen in a religious family, Jhoka was not allowed to have any friends by her father, so she could interact only with a couple of relatives. After immigration to France, Jhoka learned French, despite the fact that her parents were against it. Moreover, she spoke French most of the time. She discovered for herself that there were people of different nationalities and from various religious backgrounds. Jhoka realized that she needed education in order to be able to build a better life in France, and, despite the fact that her parents opposed her decision to continue her education, Jhoka decided to ignore her parents' opinion. Within the social realm, Jhoka

bettered her communication skills and made some friends, but, as a loyal follower of Islam, she did not want to change her religious identity and continued to follow Islamic rituals. At the same time, Jhoka obeyed the law and did not use any religious signs or clothing in her institution. In contrast with Mayana, Erdi, Sasan, Jhoka did not try to fully assimilate.

Amal and Khaled had many things in common. Thus, Khaled, a student from an Algerian background, grew up in a family where human freedom and ability to make choices were the most important values. Khaled had never been religious. He was a communicative and open minded person who had always been surrounded by many friends. Khaled did not really see major changes in his own identity. He indicated that his sense of responsibility improved when he realized that he was the only male figure in his household and had to take care of his mother and sisters. Also, Khaled, similar to Sasan, did not like questions related to his nationality or religion because he thought that his responses could be harmful for his integration.

Similar to Khaled, Amal, an immigrant student from Morocco, did not feel many changes in her own identity. Amal had always been an open minded, sincere, and communicative person, and those qualities helped her to integrate into her groups of friends as well as into society, both in Morocco and France. Amal, like Khaled, was not religious, despite the fact that her family was. The change Amal noticed after immigration was in her behavior: "I have become more French," which was similar to what Erdi felt in regards with his "German" nationality.

In sum, from the above discussion, it can be seen that all nine students had undergone or were continuing to undergo changes related to their identity. All nine

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students felt those changes and thought that the driving force behind those shifts in their identity was their attempt to integrate into European society and be accepted by locals. They understood that integration involved many hardships and obstacles, and they also realized that in order to make their new countries their homelands they needed to change from within. Despite their understanding and realization, several students still tended to preserve their culture and religion, perceiving that those preservations could potentially hinder their integration.

Research Question 2

As students in a European institution of higher education, how do Muslim immigrants describe their experiences with European education and integration into the European institutional environment and, consequently, into European society?

The discussion related to the first question revealed several points related to the second question. Namely, the above mentioned discussion showed that students perceived that the changes in their own identity occurred because they thought it would make their integration into the societies of their new countries of residence easier. They also realized the self-change did not mean success in integration. According to the students interviewed, there were various obstacles they needed to overcome in order to feel accepted by locals. Shahnazaryan (2011) asserted that institutions of higher education possessed the ability to make the integration of immigrant students easier and less painful.

In this section I focused on the experiences of Muslim immigrant students in their respective institutions of higher education. I tried to answer whether or not Muslim

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immigrant students felt integrated into their educational environment in particular and into European society in general based on the analysis of interviews with the students.

Next, I discussed what the students indicated as the existing problems and obstacles that hindered their integration into their educational environment as well as European society. I looked at participants' experiences with their peers as well as professors, and I tried to determine to what degree they felt accepted by the locals. To make the points discussed clearer, I referred to notions like: religion and ethnicity, language, unequal treatment, and the feeling of being an outsider.

Finally, I also talked about the suggestions the participants made regarding possible ways of making their integration easier and smoother in their new homelands.

Higher education and integration: How immigrant students see their integration.

Shabayev (2009) found it important for immigrants from Muslim backgrounds to enroll in institutions of higher-education in their host countries, asserting that higher education could have a positive influence on immigrants' integration in general. While Shabayev (2009) had positive feelings about higher education's role as an integrator, Polich (2011) mentioned that European institutions of higher education all over Europe might discourage many Muslim immigrant students from continuing their educations, because a tense atmosphere sometimes existed inside the institutions and there were prejudices toward Muslim immigrant students. At the same time, Gughakasyan (2008) indicated that many Muslim students did not want to integrate and that higher education could not play any role in their integration, even if they were part of that institution. As opposed to Ghukasyan, Wright and Bloemraad (2012) mentioned that immigrants did not

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integrate because: "They feel and see the silent conversation among locals and themselves" (p. 56). Wright and Bloemraad (2012) asserted that any immigrant was willing to integrate and to support the entire integration process; immigrants should be approached individually. Comparing immigrant students with first grade elementary school students, Wright and Bloemraad (2012) pointed out that they were even more vulnerable than first grade students and required individualized approach.

Across all nine cases the students felt that: "Being integrated means being accepted." The perception of the three students studying in Armenia (Viola, Ahmed and Sasan) of their higher educational institution (Yerevan State University) varied. Viola found it complicated to become part of her institutional environment because she had difficulty communicating with her Armenian peers, while Ahmed and Sasan were doing their best to make Armenian friends because they thought it would help them better integrate into their educational environment in particular and Armenian society in general. But all three students indicated that one of the most important aspects of integration was acceptance by Armenian society. In addition to "being accepted," Ahmed found himself in the middle of a "cultural game," stating that his integration also depended on accepting the local cultural value system.

The same tendency was noticeable among students studying in Germany and France. Despite the fact that some of the students were successful in their communication with local peers, they still felt that they were not accepted by many people within their higher educational institution as well as outside of it. Khaled and Amal claimed not to pay attention to any negative attitudes displayed toward them from local Europeans because they realized that being accepted and integrated would require them to ignore

those "negative messages." They tried to just do their work and to maintain their friendship with their European friends. Their childhoods in the multicultural countries of Algeria and Morocco and the influence of their families may have prepared Amal and Khaled to ignore hostility and willingly continue their integration process into the society of their new homeland.

Another tendency that appeared in all nine cases was that students tried to "look like Europeans." All nine students, for example, mostly spoke the local language even if they interacted with people who knew their mother tongue. Another important thing was that students tried to wear clothing that would make them look like their local peers. A good example was Sasan's case. He indicated that he did not want to look like other Persian students who wore specific colorful clothing and had different haircuts. Sasan tried to look like the Armenian students.

Yet another commonality among all nine students was that they found their integration into their own higher-education environments important because they thought that it would facilitate not only their entire educational process, but also their integration into European society in general. Even though, for instance, Amal and Khaled saw quite a progress in their integration, all nine students still came across various obstacles that could potentially hinder their integration. In the section to come, I discuss these obstacles described by the students.

Obstacles hindering integration.

Religion and Ethnicity.

The stories of interviewed students told us that often they avoided questions related to their ethnicity, nationality, and religion. In his study, Ibrahimov (2009) looked

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at Muslim immigrant students' behavior in higher educational institution in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Basing his research on his own 3 week long observations and interviews with five Muslim students, Ibrahimov (2009) found that all interviewed students felt uncomfortable talking about their ethnicity and religion. According to the researcher, most of the interviewed students identified themselves as citizens of the Netherlands. Ibrahimov (2009) asserted that two students wore cross necklaces and the other three had noticeable cross tattoos on their hands. Students explained to the surprised researcher that their Christian front and hiding their nationality helped them to better integrate into European society.

In line with Ibrahimov (2009), Malkhasov (2012) mentioned that often Muslim immigrant students avoided communication with other Muslim immigrants. They did not want to face questions related to their nationality or religion.

Malkhasov (2012) asserted that, when in public or when asked questions about ethnicity, Muslim immigrant students usually named as their nationality their current homeland in order to get more credit in the eyes of Europeans. Malkhasov (2012) also indicated the fact that often the younger generation of Muslim immigrants avoided contact with the older generation, such as their families, in order not to reveal their ethnicity as well as religion. Necef (1996) also looked at the issues related to nationality and religion and found that there were various cases of young Muslim immigrant students changing their real names in legal documents before entering institutions of higher education so that no one could discover their background.

In addition, Malkhasov (2012) asserted that often religious Muslim immigrants residing in Europe and studying in institutions of higher education did not accept or want

to interact with other Muslim immigrant students who intentionally hid their ethnicity and religion. The researcher also mentioned that such situations sometimes resulted in serious conflicts between the two different groups, the Europeanized and non-Europeanized Muslim immigrant students.

This conflict was evident in these cases. Viola realized that her ethnic background and her religion could potentially hinder her integration into Armenian society and stopped wearing the *hijab*, despite the fact that Armenian institutions of higher education did not prohibit it. Viola also pointed out that local students would often tease her for the clothing she wore, which made her make some changes in her appearance. But Viola could not hide her ethnicity and, according to her, everyone in her institution knew that she was from Uzbekistan. In contrast to Viola, Ahmed did not plan to make major changes to hide his nationality or religion. He thought that studying hard and being a good student could help him overcome problems related to his integration and make locals believe that "being an immigrant from Muslim background is not a mental disability." In contrast with Viola and Ahmed, Sasan almost never interacted with other Iranians, and he tried to wear clothing in the style of Armenian students. He did not consider himself a Muslim, and when asked questions about his nationality he presented himself as Armenian, and the most astonishing thing was that he sometimes wore a cross around his neck. Like Sasan, Erdi, finding himself in the middle of integration problems, thought that giving up his religion, presenting himself to others as German, and wearing European-like clothing could make his integration into German society smoother. Erdi thought that the changes he had undertaken seemed to have helped his integration.

Mayana was one of those cases that Malkhasov (2012) described in his research. She tried to avoid religious practices and think and act more like Europeans, but at the same time she indicated that she did not feel accepted either by Europeans or by immigrant students from a Muslim background.

> I understand why covered Muslims don't accept me. It is because they know that I should be Muslim, but in reality I am not. I don't even wear their type of clothing. But I feel like there are many European students who just don't want to interact with me.

Mayana, like Viola, still felt badly integrated, despite the changes she had been through.

In contrast with other students, Said was one of those students whose appearance was more or less European, which helped him avoid questions related to his nationality and religion. Said, similar to Sasan, did not wear Muslim-specific clothing, and he tried to act and think like European: "I try to behave like Europeans; I wear the same type of clothing; I eat the same type of food; and I listen to European music only."

Jhoka's case was very similar to Viola's case: the lack of friends and interaction, lack of acceptance, and low levels of communication. Despite the fact that Jhoka did not use her Yemeni clothing inside institutions, she did not feel that it helped her to integrate. She realized that her religion and ethnicity, especially after tragic events in France, could hinder her integration into French society, but she did not feel like giving up either her ethnic identity or religion. She thought that if people were going to accept her, they needed to accept her the way she was. In contrast with Jhoka, Khaled did not seem to have major problems in adapting to his institutional environment. But at the same time, Khaled, like Erdi, tried to act French and think French, because he thought that that type

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of behavior could influence his integration positively. Khaled said that he did not really like concepts such as nationality and religion. Such an attitude toward these concepts was due to the fact that Khaled realized that nationality and religion were potential obstacles toward his integration. Amal's case was similar to Kahled's case in the sense that Amal did not seem to have major problems related to her ethnicity or religion. Amal did not identify herself as a Muslim, but she told that she just had belief in God. Also, Amal mentioned that Morocco's being a multi-national country made it easy for her to be accepted by French society without having problems related to her ethnic background. At the same time, she realized that Muslim immigrants from other countries did have issues related to ethnicity and religion. Like Mayana, Amal mentioned that sometimes she felt that she was not accepted by other Muslim students due to her free outlook and communicative behavior.

Language.

Transition to a new culture and environment can be stressful. An important part of a new culture for an immigrant is the official language of the country. Nelson (2010) asserted that integration into a new society would be much easier if immigrants learned the language of their new homeland. Nelson (2010) also found that the tendency to learn the local language was especially noticeable among the younger generation of immigrants and, more specifically, among the youths who wanted to be well educated in order to be able to build their future in the new country.

At the same time, Ribes-Gil (2012) mentioned that there were many translation as well as interpretation services for immigrants in their host country:

However, it is more important to provide incentives for language learning for immigrants to accelerate their integration and thus decrease the sense of insecurity and alienation often felt initially, apart from the obvious benefits of bi-multilingualism. (p. 1)

Karabekov (2013), while looking at first generation immigrant students in Berlin, Germany, mentioned that most of the students learned German as soon as they arrived in Germany because most of them tried to assimilate with German society. Continuing his observations, Karabekov (2013) indicated that after mastering German, Muslim immigrant students tried to avoid speaking their mother tongue: "So that no one could guess their ethnicity as well as religious belonging" (p. 53).

In line with Karabekov (2013), Yashin (2014) indicated that Muslim immigrant students tried not to speak their native language even when they were at home surrounded by their families. Yashin (2014) asserted that mastering the local language could enable immigrants not only to integrate into local society but also be successful in educational institutions as well as in the job market. Ribes-Gil (2012) also noted that:

Many Turks in Germany have, by the way of upward mobility, lost their "visibility" as poor workers to become "invisible" – thus not immediately recognized as foreigners – but as professionals (doctors, engineers, and so on). Most integration factors reinforce each other: a better job is associated with more advanced language skills, this followed by a higher salary enabling the immigrant to move to live outside the original migrant sphere, thus entering into wider social contact with the host population. (p. 3)

The Muslim immigrant students in this study realized the importance of knowing and speaking the language of their host country. My observations showed that, for example Viola, did realize the importance of learning and speaking Armenian. She also understood that speaking the local language would potentially improve her integration into Armenian society. Viola struggled to learn Armenian. As to Ahmed and Sasan, both of them realized that knowledge of the Armenian language could play an important role in their integration. Both of them learned Armenian before entering Yerevan State University in order to be able to enroll in mainstream classes with Armenian students. Most of the time they spoke Armenian. Sasan's story revealed that he avoided communication with other Iranian students and tried to speak only Armenian. Ahmed also indicated that he preferred to speak Armenian most of the time. Moreover, Ahmed's major was Armenian history, not only because he was interested in it, but also because he thought that knowing the history of his host country better, would make his integration smoother. Similarly, Mayana, Erdi and Said found the knowledge of German important and thought that it could definitely make their interaction with Germans easier. Moreover, they often tried to speak German because, according to them, by doing so, they avoided questions related to their ethnic as well as religious background. While Amal and Khaled had no problem speaking French, because they grew up speaking French, Jhoka attended specialized courses in French for foreign students who were planning to continue higher education at Science Po. In contrast with Amal and Khaled, Jhoka's parents did not speak any French and they did not encourage their children to speak French. But Jhoka, realizing the importance of speaking the local language as well

as its positive influence on integration, did learn French and tried to speak it most of the time.

   Unequal treatment and the feeling of being an outsider.

   According to the Glossary of Education Reform (2015):

   Minority students may be disadvantaged by preexisting bias and prejudice in

   American society, with both conscious and unconscious discrimination surfacing

   in public schools in ways that adversely affect learning acquisition, academic

   achievement, educational aspirations, and post-graduation opportunities. While

   not always the case, inequity in education is most commonly associated with

   groups that have suffered from discrimination related to their race, ethnicity,

   nationality, language, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

   (p.3)

   The Glossary of education Reform (2015) talked about students enrolled in general education institutions in the United States, but similar statement could be made about institutions of higher education in various European countries as well. Thus, Bobrin (2013) observed that the unequal treatment by professors made local students develop prejudices toward Muslim students. Thus, Muslim students started feeling "othered." Many eventually were caused to lose interest in continuing their studies and often just dropped out. The researcher also reflected that, because of unequal treatment, the Muslim minority population was not able to fully integrate into the society of the host country. In line with Bobrin (2013), Montague and Warger (2001) discussed the unequal treatment of students and the "absence of fairness" in many institutions of higher education. Montague and Warger (2001) asserted that unequal treatment was definitely a major obstacle that

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hindered the integration of immigrant students. Montague and Warger (2001) considered important collaboration among civil society, lawyers, and most importantly policy makers, who were directly tied to education.

All nine of the student-participants in my study considered unequal treatment, which made students feel like outsiders, to be one of the major issues they dealt with. Thus, despite the fact that Amal and Khaled were more or less integrated into their educational environment, they also felt unequally treated by their professors and thought that such treatment could be detrimental to the integration of Muslim immigrants. Amal did not talk much about unequal treatment toward herself, but her interviews made it clear that she was aware of an existing problem and noticed that many Muslim immigrant students did face that problem. Khaled did talk about his own unequal treatment and existing prejudices toward him. At the same time, both Amal and Khaled preferred to ignore the negative treatment, considering their integration vitally important for their education in particular and life in France in general. They kept up with making many friends among the French and other Europeans, and they were actively involved in educational activities. Both students perceived that their integration was vitally important and preferred not to feel like outsiders.

Jhoka's, Viola's, and Mayan's cases showed that the three young students did have a hard time integrating into both their educational environment and into the societies of their host countries. The interviews of these three students revealed that some professors sometimes did not treat them well. The students could not make friends with local students, which would make their integration smoother. They felt like outsiders and distanced from Europeans. The students thought that unequal treatment by their

professors reflected on the local students as well and caused the local population to keep away from them. This type of attitude made all three students feel "othered" inside and outside of their institution. According to students, very few professors were supportive and approachable.

Erdi, Said, Sasan and Ahmed felt unequally treated by professors and even sometimes by students. All four students had good knowledge of the language of their host country and mostly interacted with locals both inside and outside the institution. They thought that interaction and communication with local European students was the main key to their integration. And all four students did their best and studied hard to prove to their professors that they deserved better treatment.

To conclude, I would like to add that all nine students knew that their integration was important not only for their education but also for their attempt to become good citizens of their host countries.

All nine students mentioned that professors' unequal treatment influenced the opinions of local students about Muslim immigrants. At the same time, Muslim immigrant students thought that the reason behind their unequal treatment was their religion and the country of origin. That was the main reason students avoided speaking their native language, tried to behave like Europeans (for example, through clothing, haircut and even thinking), and work hard to ignore negative messages from their professors and peers.

How to make integration smoother.

As we saw from the above discussion, all nine students discussed various obstacles related to their integration. Students also asserted that integration was vitally

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important for them, not only for their successful completion of their education but also for becoming lawful members of the society of their respective host country.

Gyurzaev (2011), based on examining various institutions of higher education all over Europe, talked about diverse population of migrant students from different ethnic as well as religious backgrounds. The researcher observed different groups of students, examined issues related to their integration, and asserted that there was a tendency among students from Muslim backgrounds not to integrate as well as migrant students from Christian backgrounds. Gyurzaev (2011) indicated that Muslim students felt segregated because they often felt they were mistreated by their professors and peers. The researcher also discussed the student cliques and notes that often students from Muslim backgrounds interacted among one another and tried to keep a distance from their European peers. At the same time, Gyurzaev (2011) made us aware that the overall educational environment did not really play a role of integrator the way it should. One of the main solutions suggested by the researcher was the incorporation of culture-related subjects and activities in which all students could participate, present their culture, and talk about their problems both inside and outside their institution. This would enable local European professors and peers know immigrant students better.

Omar Mahmoud, Rapoport, Steinmayr, and Trebesch (2013) conducted a similar study where he looked at various educational institutions in former Soviet Union. The researcher mentioned that, while the student population was diverse, the professors' population consisted of mostly local professors. Omar Mahmoud et al. (2013) stressed the importance of recruiting and hiring professors from migrant backgrounds, which would bring the overall institutional population into some kind of balance. The researcher

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thought that having migrant colleagues would help local professors better understand the hardships that migrants face and treat students equally.

Thus, considering the experiences of the nine student-participants of my study, the following suggestions are consonant with those suggested by Omar Mahmoud et al. (2013) and Gyurzaev (2011). The student participants thought that their integration into their educational environment and, consequently, into European society would be smoother if the educational institutions offered recreational facilities for all students, so that they could attend those and get to know one another. Diverse cultural and interactive student clubs were among the means students thought could support their integration. By attending those clubs, students from various backgrounds could interact and share their interests.

Student participants also discussed the curriculum. Mayana suggested the following: "The university curriculum should incorporate subjects related to immigrants, to their issues, problems, and hardships. That way European peers will know more about our lives, and it is very possible that their treatment will change toward better."

Among other suggestions related to changes in curriculum was the suggestion to include subjects related to culture, which could help European students know more about the countries where their immigrant peers came from. Jhoka said, "I think there should be some informative classes for locals, where they can learn more about Islam and Muslim immigrants and understand that not all of us are scary."

Finally, students mentioned that they lacked one-to-one meetings with their professors where they could talk about education-related problems and find solutions together, mentioning that those meetings would be helpful for both students and

professors. Professors would thus get to know migrant students better, which could be beneficial for their integration. Also, student-participants mentioned that most of their professors were local Europeans and saw a need of having professors who had migrant backgrounds:

> Another important thing would be to hire a diverse group of professors, which would be helpful. I know many educated people from Muslim background who used to be professors in their countries and who are really proficient in the field of political science. Why don't they hire those people when the institution lacks professors of certain subject fields? If the local professors interacted with migrant professors, they would probably change their negative attitude.

In sum, the discussion above shows that the nine students had various experiences while studying at their respective institutions of higher education. Some students continued to face many difficulties while trying to integrate into their educational environment and into the society of their host country. All students thought that integration was vitally important for them because problems with integration would exert a negative influence on their education, their future careers, and their lives in Europe. The students talked about the potential obstacles that they thought could hinder their integration. Finally, the students made suggestions and came up with different ideas for making their integration in their educational environment smoother.

Research Question 3

How do Muslim immigrant students perceive the higher-educational

environments of France, Germany, and Armenia?

In response to the last question of my study, I tried to reveal Muslim immigrant

students' opinions about European higher education and how they perceived their

educational environments in general. Based on a cross-case analysis of the responses, I

tried to clarify what Muslim immigrant students saw as advantageous as well as

disadvantageous in current European higher-education policy. I tried to determine

whether or not there were any important issues that, according to Muslim immigrant

students, policy makers should consider. I also discussed the student-participants'

suggestions for changes in the European policy on higher education.

Advantages and disadvantages of European higher-education policy.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the Bologna Process served as the context of

my research. Despite the fact that the Bologna Process was designed and intended to be

student-centered, encourage student participation, and allow all students access, Muslim

students from migrant backgrounds faced many problems in institutions of higher

education in Europe. The exclusion of migrant students was also noted in Kraśniewski's

(2009) and Wächter's (2004) research works.

Thus, Kraśniewski (2009), while looking at European policy on higher education,

discussed issues as well as problems related to the Bologna Process. Specifically, the

researcher asserted that there were many aspects within the process "which seem to be

advantageous," but in practice many students, especially those from migrant

backgrounds, were left out. More specifically, the researcher talked about problems

related to participation in decision making, high tuition fees in some European states, and a lack of scholarships in many universities all over Europe, especially Eastern Europe. Kraśniewski (2009) pointed out that often the existing problems within the Bologna Process could become serious enough obstacles for many students from migrant backgrounds to drop out from their respective institutions of higher education and search for low-paying employment opportunities. As the researcher observed, students who dropped-out almost never went back to their studies.

Similarly, Wächter (2004), while acknowledging the decision-making aspect of the process and the active participation of European students in it, indicated that not many students from migrant backgrounds participated in those processes. Wächter (2004) observed that the exclusion of immigrant students from those processes resulted in the exclusion of their problems, which often became frustrating for them.

The student-participants' interviews revealed that students studying in Armenian institutions of higher education had more knowledge about the Bologna Process than students in France and Germany. Armenian institutions of higher education did organize conferences and discussions on the Bologna Process in which the main focus and the agenda of the process was presented to students. However, in spite of the fact that those informative conferences around the Bologna Process existed, the Armenian institutions of higher education failed the full implementation of the declaration and many students remained partially excluded.

For example, Viola liked the idea of being able to choose the subjects she was interested in and thought that the flexibility of the degrees received opened up many doors for the students to, for example, transferring credits to other universities. According

to Viola, the educational costs as well as tuition fees were high and often many students could not afford to pay them. Another negative aspect was that Viola was not enrolled in student council and believed that it was because she had no connections to be able to enroll. This made it impossible for Viola to participate in decision-making processes and voice existing problems. Also the policy did not promote an integrative educational environment. Viola thought that for the institution to promote integration and participation, the staff needed to be well-trained, and Armenian professors still lacked training and were not ready for the Bologna Process. Ahmed noted the same advantages and disadvantages related to the implementation of the Bologna Process, adding that students in Armenia lacked access to technologically well-equipped classrooms: "The mal function of the entire library as well as computer lab systems is a huge obstacle for Yerevan State University, which does not allow the student-researchers to conduct research or exchange knowledge with students from other universities all over Europe."

Sasan had the same point of view on Armenian higher educational policy. Echoing Viola, he added that the selection of students for the student council was not transparent enough and prohibited many students from actively participating in the decision making and talking about their concerns and problems.

In contrast with student-participants studying in Armenia, students from Germany did not have much knowledge about the Bologna Process except for a few general ideas. All three students, Erdi, Mayana, and Said, like the student-participants from Armenia, spoke positively about the flexibility of the Bologna Process and the opportunity of transferring credits to various universities all over Europe. In contrast with Viola, Ahmed and Sasan, German student-participants, mentioned that they had many opportunities

interacting with their peers overseas through technological means. They indicated that they had access to rich online libraries. They also had opportunities to participate in online discussions and conferences. Also significant was the fact that starting in 2014 the German government began awarding scholarships to Muslim students, covering their tuition and other education-related costs. Among the disadvantageous aspects was their lack of involvement in decision making process and lack of diversity among the professors (lack of professors from migrant backgrounds), which, according to students, would have a positive influence on the overall educational environment.

In contrast with the other student-participants, Jhoka did not see educational policy promoting her integration. In line with other complaints related to unequal treatment, she complained about high tuition fees and problems related to finding scholarships. Jhoka also found it bothersome the country's laws regarding religious practice in educational institutions and the usage of religious signs such as prayer rooms and head covers. Outside of those problems, Jhoka thought that overall education was accessible, if students had enough money to pay for it and good knowledge of French.

Khaled and Amal were the only interviewed students who were actively involved in student life. They both were enrolled in student council, and they actively participated in the decision-making process, and by doing so they not only voiced their own problems, but also concerns of other migrant students. Khaled said that he liked the idea of multilingual classes, which would allow students to choose classes in languages they know. Khaled mentioned the high tuition fees as a potential issue, one that could hinder access to education. He thought that scholarships should be more need based than merit based. Another major issue was that Khaled did not like the quality of education and

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thought that the bachelor's degree did not allow students to become proficient in the subject field of their choice.

Amal was the only student among those interviewed who had knowledge of the Bologna Process and thought that it had many aspects which could have a positive influence on education in general. She liked the idea of flexibility and the possibilities of transferring credits, but most of all she was happy that the policy gave students opportunities to be involved in exchange programs and travel to other European countries. Amal mentioned being able to have visiting professors and thought that it definitely helped not only professors grow professionally but also students to hear new perspectives on different subjects. As to the negative aspects Amal indicated that:

> You know, I know many students that leave school because of financial problems and they never come back to school. They just go and find a job in a restaurant or a place like that, so that they can make their everyday living. I also had problems and applied to a Middle Eastern organization and was lucky to be granted a scholarship. It covers all my needs. Another aspect is also related to tuition. The prices are very high. If the prices were lower, maybe we could find a side job and pay our tuition. If I could I would encourage the introduction of need based scholarships as well, so that many students would benefit.

Amal, similar to students from Germany, noted the lack of diversity among professors, indicating that most of them are locals.

This discussion made it clear that students found the European policy on higher education both advantageous and disadvantageous. While talking about the advantages of the policy, they also mentioned that the existing disadvantages had the potential of

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hindering their integration into their educational environment and societies of their host country. Among other problems, one of the disadvantages most frequently mentioned was the issue of non-participation in the decision-making processes and non-enrollment in student councils of the universities. Also, tuition was a major problem for students studying in Armenia and France.

What changes should be made to promote integration?

Ghazaryan (2013), when discussing immigrant students' problems of integration into their educational environment and consequently into the society of their host country, mentioned that the higher educational policy had an important role to play. Ghazaryan (2013) specifically observed Armenian institutions of higher education. The researcher mentioned that in Armenia the access to education had gotten worse after it signed the Bologna declaration because the country was not ready for it. Ghazaryan (2013) asserted that the process was expensive as it required the introduction of tuition fees, which increased educational costs. The researcher indicated that many young Armenian students were left out of educational institutions because of high costs, stating that it was even harder for immigrants to pay those costs. At the same time, the researcher talked about the lack of scholarships that could help both Armenian and immigrant students studying in Armenia. Ghazaryan (2013) mentioned that only "lucky" students could afford to study in Armenia, only if they were able to find a good scholarship. Ghazaryan (2013) also discussed the need to establish not only merit-based scholarships but also need-based ones, which would make the access easier.

Similarly, Pavlenko (2012) looked at institutions of higher education in Germany, France, Spain, and Portugal. The researcher stressed the need for a more flexible

scholarship system, but he also noted the problems of immigrant student disengagement

from the decision-making processes:

There is a lack of immigrant students involved in the decision making process. It

is one of the major issues, which educational policy needs to solve.

Administrators of higher educational institutions need to know about the problems

that immigrants have so that they can somehow solve those problems. But the

functions of educational policy are unclear in this case. How are students selected

to be part of student councils and participate in decision making processes? Why

are most of those students non-immigrants? There should be equality and all

students should have the right of participation. Policy makers should establish a

system, which will involve each and every student no matter what their ethnic or

religious background is. (p. 87)

While Ghazaryan (2013) and Pavlenko (2012) discussed the problems related to

the high costs of education and lack of migrant students' participation in decision making,

Banconi (2014) talked about the lack of diversity among professors. Banconi (2014),

based on his own observations, noted that Muslim immigrant students were mistreated by

professors, which made them less integrated. The researcher thought that the policy

should allow diversity among professors as well:

If we have a diverse population of students, among them Muslim immigrants, we

should also give a chance to those educated people who used to teach at the

universities in their home countries. I know many cases of immigrant educated

professors applying for a university position and being turned down. The policy

should be flexible enough to allow diversity in all spheres of education, including

in hiring professors from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. This may have a positive impact on student professor relationship and the level of unequal treatment may well be reduced. (p. 47)

Introduction of need-based scholarships.

Student-participants reflected on the issues mentioned above as well. Muslim immigrant students studying in Armenia and France complained about hardships finding scholarships. Taking those hardships into consideration, students thought that the policy should encourage the establishment of not only merit-based scholarships but need-based ones as well. For example Amal thought that:

> There are many students all over the institution, especially immigrants like me, who really need financial support to be able to pay their tuition and other educational needs. But most of the scholarships that we can apply for are merit based, and I have noticed that immigrant students are almost always left out. So we have to apply to different Middle Eastern foundations or foundations which support Muslims from Africa to be able to get scholarships. You know, I know many students that leave school because of financial problems, and they never come back to school. They just go and find a job in a restaurant or a place like that so that they can make their everyday living. I also had problems and applied to a Middle Eastern organization and was lucky to be granted a scholarship. It covers all my needs. Another aspect is also related to tuition. The prices are very high. If the prices were lower, maybe we could find a side job and pay our tuition. If I could, I would encourage the introduction of need-based scholarships as well, so that many students would benefit.

Khaled, echoing Amal's opinion, mentioned that tuition fees can potentially hinder student integration because many students dropped out from their institutions and sought low paying jobs to make ends meet. Those students almost never came back to continue their educational career. Khaled thought that the existing scholarships seemed to be for local students only. Germany was one of the European states where the Bologna Process was implemented partially. The educational costs in Germany were not as high as in other European states. Besides, as the students indicated, the country's government began providing financial support to Muslim immigrant students starting in 2014, which made overall access to education easier and improved the possibilities of their integration.

Students studying in Armenia also thought that tuition was one of the major issues that could have a negative influence on their overall education. Also, they thought that Armenian institutions of higher education were not ready for the Bologna Process and one of the reasons was high tuition fees, which were not only unaffordable by immigrant students but also by local Armenian students.

To summarize concerning tuition related problems, policy makers should take into consideration the presence of immigrants in institutions of higher education and try to make the overall access easier for all of them. As suggested by student participants the introduction of need-based scholarships in line with the merit based ones, would be beneficial for many students and would make their access and integration easier.

Participation in decision making.

The results of the interviews with student-participants showed that only two of the students, Amal and Khaled, were enrolled in student councils and actively participated in

decision making, which was not in tune with one of the main principals of the Bologna

Process. The interviews revealed that the lack of participation in the decision making

process deprived students from the opportunity of voicing their problems and making

some changes for their own good. Students also thought that the lack of involvement in

student councils could have a negative influence on their overall integration. With regard

to involvement in decision making, Sasan mentioned:

> I would really love to be part of decision making. I don't know how they choose
>
> the students who can be part of a student body, but I am not there and I don't like
>
> it. I told you I have problems with a couple of professors, so if I was a part of
>
> student body, I could voice my problems and maybe many things would change. I
>
> think the elections of student body members are not transparent enough. I don't
>
> think that those elections are democratic either. I think some students have really
>
> good connections with university officials, and that is how they are elected.

Interviews made it clear that the student-participants, especially those who study

at Yerevan State University, Armenia, did not notice any transparency when students

were elected for the student council. As Ahmed mentioned, often it felt like those

students were elected based on some good connections.

In sum, student-participants thought that each and every single student should be

given the opportunity to voice his or her problems, because by doing so they might solve

important problems related to their education, which, in its turn, could help them become

more integrated into their institutional life.

Diversity among professors.

All nine student-participants suggested that they face many prejudices and mistreatment while studying at their institutions of higher education. Students thought that it was because of their ethnic and religious background, because many Europeans often approached Muslims with a negative bias. This unequal treatment was especially obvious among their professors. Student-participants indicated that this type of bad attitude also reflected on local European students who tried to avoid interaction with their Muslim peers. All nine students thought that the unequal treatment had negative influence on their overall integration. Amal indicated the following:

> I think that the unequal treatment is one of the major problems. Many students regret they came to this institution and they are not even trying to integrate. Professors create a distance between locals and migrants. I think the messages they send out, make local students to hate Muslim immigrant students.

Despite the fact that Amal avoided those negative attitudes and tried to neglect unspoken messages just for the sake of integration, other students did not really find the strength to do so, which made their institutional life complicated.

Thus, the student participants thought that their institutions did have diverse populations of students, but at the same time they did not really see diversity among the professors. It would be true to say that all of the interviewed students would share the following opinion, as expressed by Khaled:

> It is really hard for me to say how the policy influences my integration, but as I said before, the opinion of professors matters and does influence the integration. Many immigrant students from Muslim backgrounds struggle because of those

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opinions. I think that, to promote integration of all students, there should be equal treatment of the entire student population. Also, to be able to reach the point of equality, I think the educational policy should encourage the hiring of professors from diverse and religious backgrounds. I think, in case of having diverse population of both students and professors, the entire educational environment will change toward the better and will encourage integration inside as well as outside the institution.

Policy makers should take into account that having diversity among student as well as professors, both, could influence the integration of immigrant students in a positive manner. Having professors from diverse ethnic and religious background would allow migrant students to easily approach them and to express their concerns and problems without constraints. Also, hiring more ethnically and religiously diverse professors could also solve the major problem of unequal treatment of students, because collegial interactions would influence the worldview of local professors.

Another solution to the problem of unequal treatment, as suggested by some of the student-participants, would be the introduction of individual meeting hours with students. According to student-participants, this would help professors to get to know the students better. Individual meeting could also change the overall approach of professors and make them approach existing problems individually.

Above I addressed the research questions by tabulating the results of the thematic analysis across cases. Next, I addressed questions related to student-participants' social and religious identity based on their background information. I attended issues related to identity changes after immigration to Europe. I also addressed questions related to

students' experiences in their respective institutions of higher education, where I looked at issues related to their integration and acceptance by society beyond the institution. I also referred to problems, which, according to them, hinder their integration. Finally, I looked at problems of European policy on higher education, addressed the advantages and disadvantages of the policy based on the analysis of data provided by students and voiced student suggestions/changes related to European higher education policy. The chapter that follows discusses the implications of the present study and possibilities of future research.

Chapter 6

Implications and Conclusion

This dissertation study focused on the influence of higher education on the integration of nine Muslim students from migrant backgrounds into Armenian, German, and French society. It was based on the narratives of nine Muslim students from diverse ethnic and family backgrounds, and it attempted to reveal how Muslim immigrant students perceived their experiences with social and religious identity; how those identities changed or remained stable after immigrating, residing, and studying in Europe; how European higher education policy promoted the integration of Muslim immigrant students (through, for example, participation in civic and educational life, voicing their needs and problems, participating in decision making processes through various student affiliated organizations, and so on) into Armenian, German, and French societies. The study was conducted in three European countries: Armenia, Germany, and France. The interviews were conducted in English, as all nine student participants could speak English.

Implications for Existing Literature

The current European reality can be sometimes harsh when it comes to Muslim immigrants. The fact that representatives of the Islamic faith have been connected to tragic events in recent years in many European countries has increased negative attitudes and mistrust toward Muslims. Europeans may blame the individuals responsible for those tragic events, but it is wrong to blame the entire population.

Bamyeh (2010) mentioned that identities could undergo changes when individuals changed their home countries. According to Bamyeh (2010) those changes were due to the fact that those individuals wanted to assimilate with the local population in order to avoid the feeling of "otherness." Thus, while looking at the results of the data provided by the nine students I interviewed, I noticed that they did realize that their identities, both religious and social, had undergone changes. The results also revealed that those changes occurred not only because students appeared to be in a new environment but also because they faced problems while trying to integrate into the societies of their new countries.

To a large extent, participants' observations about the changes in their identities and its relation to integration were in tune with my expectations and with the literature. In particular, all participants uniformly discussed that they underwent changes in identity because they wanted to be accepted and more integrated into the societies of their host countries. Kurien (1998) and Rayaprol (1997) argued that the religious identity of Muslim immigrants rarely underwent changes due to the fact that Muslims were inclined to keep their home country's traditions and continued practicing Islam, even in a foreign environment. Despite Kurien's (1998) and Raypapol's (1997) assertion, Ghaffar-Kucher (2015) observed a tendency, which could be in line with the results of the present research. Thus, Ghaffar-Kucher (2015), while observing Pakistani American youth at the American schools, used the framework of "imagined nostalgia." What the author meant by imagined nostalgia was that, "For the Pakistani immigrant families, the nostalgia was for way of life they had left in Pakistan, where religion served as a moral compass for everyday life choices and decisions" (p. 203). By drawing parallels among behavioral similarities of Pakistani-American students and the participants of the present study it should be

mentioned that according to Ghaffar-Kucher (2015), "One group longs for a world where assimilation into the dominant group is expected and accepted; the other longs for the homeland, which they try to recreate in their new home through imagined nostalgia" (p.204). The results of my research showed that students, like Said, Erdi, Amal, and Khaled, did not feel like practicing their religion in Europe, as they thought that it could potentially hinder their integration. As opposed to the abovementioned students Jhoka and Viola, despite shifts in their identities. Thus, I think that this study could be an addition to Ghaffar-Kucher's (2015) research on Punjabi-American and Pakistani-American school students' identities.

Participants often felt "othered" because of the existing distance between them and local Europeans, which made them think that changes in identity could help them break the distance. The phenomenon of feeling "othered" could relate and add to what social scientists Jugé and Perez (2006) as well as Bhabha (1994) observed. While researching minority populations in France, Jugé and Perez (2006) asserted that often migrants, racial as well as religious minorities were not accepted by locals, which made them feel "othered." My observations were also consonant with Bhabha's (1994) research where the scientist talked about the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in the division of "nature/culture" (p. 46).

There was also another interesting observation which was in line with and could add to discussion of Bamyeh's (2010) and Schmidt's (2012) research on identity shifts because of societal pressures. Two of the participants (Khaled, Amal) indicated that they tried to ignore the negative attitude of some professors and peers in order to be able to integrate. Their experience showed that, sometimes ignoring and neglecting the unspoken

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negative message or attitude could help people make progress in their endeavors toward integration. Speaking of Amal and Khaled, I should note that those students immigrated from Morocco and Algeria, where the societies were more or less free and multicultural compared to other Islamic states.

Jhoka, from Yemen, faced a hard time while trying to adapt to the values of her new home country (France) because those values drastically differed from the ones in Yemen. Jhoka valued her religious identity and it seemed like she did not want to lose it because of her new residence. Stevick (2017) observed that, "When people travel to other countries, their presence in another society activates the category of culture…" (p. 554). The researcher's observation was consonant with how Jhoka felt. Viola experienced similar problems as Jhoka. Jhoka and Viola, compared to other participants, did not put much effort into their integration, despite the fact that they felt many changes in their social and religious identities. These types of observations suggested that the participants' home countries and their respective values also played an important role as they tried to build their lives in their new homeland. Thus, Jhoka and Viola could belong to the group of Muslim immigrant students with philosophical/natural view of identity indicated by Bhabha (1994).

Other important points revealed in this study were related to the integration of Muslim immigrant students into their institutional environment and consequently into the societies of their new homelands. The results of the interview showed that all of the interviewed students did not feel completely integrated and they saw the need to continue their integration endeavors in order to become part of the European society. Along with shifts in their social and religious identities, some of the interviewed Muslim students

tried to change their appearance, way of thinking, worldviews, and even the language, in order to become more Europeanized and get in tune with European society. The students thought that Europeans might favor those types of changes and accept them into their societies. The study included cases of students who not only attempted to integrate but also assimilate with Europeans. These examples contradict the argument made by Trofimova (2009) when she denied that Muslim immigrants were willing to completely change their social and religious identities and become Europeanized.

The findings of the present research could also be explained through the lenses of Porter's and Zhou's theory on segmented assimilation. All participants of the present research had aspirations and dreams, which was the main guiding force behind their wish to assimilate with the society of their host country. My findings are consonant with what Portes and Zhou (1993) identified as "increasing acculturation and integration into the American (e.g. European) middle class." Thus, the aim of student-participants of becoming part of that very middle class could be explained by the fact that they all desired to become well-educated, which, according to them, could open up many prospects for them in the years to come. Also, in general the educated stratum of population usually constitutes the European middle class. At the same time, students like Viola and Jhoka pertained to the group of immigrants who, according to Portes and Zhou (1993), could serve as an example of what scientists called "selective acculturation." Jhoka and Viola were trying to preserve at least some aspects of their home culture and traditions.

Further, the results showed that the educational institutions did not really create an environment that promoted the integration of Muslim immigrant students. For

example, Yerevan State University did not have interactive student clubs or spots where students could get together and communicate. The German and French institutions in the study did have interactive spaces for students and organized student activities, but the Muslim immigrant students felt left out. Another major problem, as derived from the results of student data, was that only two Muslim immigrant students actively participated in university decision making and were members of their institution's student council. The disengagement from decision-making processes deprived students from the possibility of expressing their opinions and problems.

Sides and Citrin (2007) would agree with my observation that Muslim immigrant students were unequally treated by their professors, and unfortunately the opinion of those professors affected the European students as well and resulted in their distancing from Muslim peers.

Despite the existing problems in their educational institutions, Muslim students thought that changes in education policy could help them become more integrated. This type of observation would be favored by authors like Bruzgalina (2011) and Galavin (2010), who, similar to Muslim immigrant students, asserted education's power in making change and assisting integration.

The current research could be a good addition to literature related to identity in general and immigrant identity in particular. It could add to studies which observe the changes in identity of immigrants in their new countries of residence. It could also be a good addition to the educational literature related to the study of minority students and their adaptation to their institutional environment. Researchers like Mitchell (2006), Kalinin (2010), and Jaloyan (2008) could refer to this research while discussing

educational policy and its influence on the integration of Muslim students, taking into consideration the changes suggested by Muslim students. This research could be a unique addition to the collection of Armenian researchers. It should be mentioned that there were general research works conducted by Armenian researchers which looked at the problems of the Bologna Process's implementation in Armenia without reference to Muslim immigrant students. Researchers observing Muslim immigrant students in other Eastern European states could also incorporate the results of this study into their research works and cite the problems voiced by the nine Muslim immigrant students. Thus, in this respect, this research could be considered foundation for research into Muslim immigrant students' experiences in Armenia. Finally, it is my hope that my study based on the narratives of Muslim immigrant students could be a useful contribution to educational and sociological literature observing the experiences of Muslim populations in Europe.

Implications for Policy Makers

Shah (2018) discussed the influence of various strategies as well as policies on education of Muslim students at the UK state schools:

> The educational leaders in schools with substantial number of Muslim students struggle to deliver on educational objectives while caught between the demands of shifting identity dynamics and the associated expectations from schools, and the pressures of implementing the national agendas, policies, and strategies. (p. 18)

The focus of one of my research questions was the impact of European policy of higher education on the integration of Muslim immigrant students into their institutional environment and consequently into European society, which relates to Shah's (2018) discussion on the influence of policies and strategies. While responding to this question,

the interviewed students voiced many issues which were related to European policy on higher education and which policy makers should take into account.

The present research revealed that there were many issues and problems that European higher education policy makers should take into account while implementing the Bologna Process and its principles in all participating countries. The Bologna Process was supposed to encourage the active participation of all students in the decision making processes. The participation in decision making would allow students to voice their problems and suggest changes that would be beneficial for their entire educational process and help them become integrated into their educational environment, all of which would also have a positive influence on their integration into European society. The student data showed that only two out of nine interviewed students actively participated in decision making. According to data many students were left behind and unable to talk about their problems or make suggestions. This type of disengagement could have a negative influence on overall student integration and cause students to feel segregated. This research showed the problems and the desire for participation of only seven students, but possibly there were many more students out there who were left behind from those processes. Therefore this research could become the basis for policy makers to look at this problem from another angel and make some important changes that could have a positive influence on student participation in decision-making processes.

Another major issue discussed in this research was the cost of education. The implementation of the Bologna Process required financial means, which made the tuition costs quite high. Once free of charge, European education was now unaffordable for many students, especially for those from migrant backgrounds. Students had problems

finding financial aid, and sometimes they gave up and dropped out, leaving behind their education-related dreams. Despite the fact that most of the students mentioned problems related to finding scholarships that would support their education-related costs, Armenia's case caught my attention. Students studying in Armenia mentioned that Armenia did not seem to be ready for the Bologna Process: the tuition fees were high, there was no well-developed and elaborated scholarship system, the classrooms were poorly equipped, and the library was not updated. These were all finance-related issues. The indicated problems made clear that students paid a large amount of money but did not really get what they expected. The Quality Assurance principal of the Bologna Process seemed to be vague in Armenian institutions of higher education. Ideally, there should be an equilibrium between demand and supply, which was not noticeable in Armenia's higher education system. Therefore, the policy makers and the leaders who coordinate the Bologna Process should take into consideration the country context and the needs of all students who receive their higher education within that country context. Students complained about the accessibility to existing scholarships. Specifically, they mentioned that most of the scholarships were merit-based, while there were many students all over the institution who would benefit from need-based scholarships. So, if there is a diverse population of students with diverse needs, policy makers should take into account the existing diversity and try to change the policy in a way which would give equal opportunities to all students and make them integrated.

Another major issue was the unequal treatment by professors, which definitely could have a negative influence on their integration. As student-participants asserted, there was not much diversity among professors. Policy makers have the power to

encourage the hiring of professors from various religious, migrant, and ethnic backgrounds. Minasyan (2014) indicated that Armenian institutions of higher education only hired Armenian professors, and that was the reason professors did not really favor students from non-Armenian background. According to Minasyan (2014), there was an imbalance of diversity, which caused unequal treatment of students. Therefore, the policy makers should encourage the involvement of professors from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, because this would be encouraging for students and they could approach their professors with more ease. Diversity among professors could help solve problems related to unequal treatment and render students more integrated.

Finally, in accordance with the wish expressed by student participants, policy makers could incorporate culture-related classes and activities into the curricula of higher education so that local European students and professors would get to know more about the culture and traditions of their immigrant peers, students, and neighbors. The incorporation of culture-related subjects and extracurricular opportunities could definitely enhance the integration of migrant students. The culture-related activities, service learning (e.g. community related activities, engagement in decision making related to various educational aspects, organization of extra-curricular activities etc.) could be part of the tasks conducted by student affairs staff. Thus, while studying the role of student affairs staff in engaging students into the life of their higher educational institution Caruso, Bowen, and Adams-Dunford (2006) talked about the tasks which student affairs staff could complete in order to promote the integration and engagement of students. Among those activities the researchers accentuated service learning, which according to them, could engage students from diverse backgrounds. Service learning could also apply

to students of the present research and could promote their integration not only into their university life but also into the host society in general.

Implications for Professors Teaching Immigrant Students

Immigrant students are motivated and are willing to work extremely hard. They have many struggles that natives cannot relate to, nor have to face, while pursuing their higher education. It is hoped that these suggestions will help professors and university administrators better understand and accept immigrant students who are committed to learning. Universities need to recognize that if they are going to have diverse student bodies—more and more inevitable due to today's changing national demographics—they must be proactive in providing a place of comfort and support that allows learning to take place, and students to apply their skills to their educational tasks. Universities should encourage learning in all students and provide as many opportunities for success as possible. (Rocha-Tracy, 2009, p. 32)

The results of the present study showed that Muslim immigrant students faced unequal treatment from their professors, which could become a huge obstacle for their integration. The negative attitude of professors reflected on European students as well, which often resulted in lack of communication among Muslim immigrant and local students. The observation regarding unequal treatment of Muslim immigrant students by professors and the negative attitude of their local peers towards them could become a good addition to the research conducted by Ali (2014). Ali's (2014) observations show that:

… the students revealed that they felt "Americans" are not just fearful of the Muslim in abstract, but rather feel this fear is personified through the portrayal of

sleeper cells, for example, on entertainment television, in political speech, and through legal processes. Through focusing on Muslims as the singular purveyor of domestic terror, it is not surprising that Muslim students felt their peers see them through these tropes. The students stated that their peers believed it is not simply some Muslims who are dangerous, but that every Muslim runs the risk of "becoming radicalized" and is thus dangerous. (p. 1260)

The present study could offer professors some grounds for changing their attitude toward their Muslim immigrant students and treating them equally, like their European peers.

As the students studying in Armenia indicated, their professors were not used to teaching multicultural classrooms as Armenian classrooms used to be very homogeneous during Soviet times. They also lacked training and, while lecturing on their subjects, often used the old-fashioned paradigm, which had nothing to do with the Bologna Process and its democratic principles. To make sure that professors are up-to-date enough and can handle teaching in multicultural classrooms, the need to be well-trained before entering the classroom was another concern mentioned by student-participants.

Further, it would be beneficial if professors perceived the difference between an immigrant student and a local one. The immigrant students, compared to most of the local ones, are more vulnerable because they are usually in an unfamiliar environment, and may need some time to adapt. Instead of treating students with a negative attitude, professors should encourage their participation and, most importantly, try to approach each and every student individually. As Rocha-Tracy (2009) indicated, professors often

used the "one model for all" approach, which did not allow vulnerable students, like immigrants, to be more open and express their feelings and opinions on various issues.

As the student-participants indicated, often professors did not involve them in discussions, which left the students with no possibility to show their knowledge on a certain subject field. If professors took into consideration the opinions of immigrant students, it would help the students feel more comfortable in the classroom and also help professors evaluate the level of the knowledge of their own students.

Finally, professors could take into consideration that immigrant students came from a variety of cultures and backgrounds and their being Muslim did not necessarily make them similar. Thus, to know their students better, it would help professors to be more flexible in holding individual meetings with them, to help the students with subject-related issues, and to support them morally and with advice. These types of meetings would allow professors to get to know their students better and, conversely, the students would feel more comfortable approaching and asking questions from their professors.

Implications for Future Research

The present research provided the opportunity to explore the narratives of nine immigrant students from Muslim backgrounds who resided and studied in Armenia, Germany, and France. This dissertation study revealed Muslim immigrant students' experiences with their religious and social identity in their home country and in their host country. To be able to represent a broad range of experience and perspective I interviewed students of diverse ethnic backgrounds and ages. The study was focused on the narratives of students.

Thus, the findings provided insights about various experiences with social and religious identity in different country and institution contexts that could set the stage for future research on identity in general and shifts in migrant identity in particular. That might mean focusing on experiences of migrant students from various ethnic and religious backgrounds for the sake of comparison; or conducting comparative research with regard to the experiences of migrant students from Muslim backgrounds with an emphasis on Eastern European countries. Eastern European space could be a good starting point not only because existing research lacks examination of the lived experiences of migrant students from Muslim backgrounds, but because the implementation of European policy on higher education (the Bologna Process) all over Eastern European states is somewhat distinct from its implementation in Western Europe (e.g. the Bologna Process is still in its development stage in Eastern Europe).

Further, it would be beneficial to conduct follow-up research and examine the same nine students and their experiences in a couple of years in order to see whether or not their attitudes have changed and what their feelings are with regard to their integration into the societies of their host countries.

Finally, examining Muslim immigrant students from the same ethnic backgrounds could also be important in order to see if there were any variations in their narratives with regard to the perception of their identity changes and integration into European society.

Research Agenda Reflections

Moving forward with my research agenda, I am planning to engage in research which focuses exclusively on European policy on higher education. This type of examination will allow me to better understand what major aspects of policy, beyond the

ones already suggested by the student participants, should be changed in order for the policy to play the role of integrator and create an environment where all students are included and treated equally.

Furthermore, Le Fique (2014), while looking at French institutions of higher education within the framework of his research, indicated that Muslim immigrant students influenced French students, which resulted in identity and behavior changes among the French students. It would be beneficial for me as a researcher to examine local European students and hear their narratives regarding their Muslim immigrant peers. This type of research would enable me to reveal not only the point of views of local European students, but also to see if those students undergo any identity changes that are the result of the influence of their Muslim immigrant peers.

Finally, I plan to compare the experiences of migrant students who reside in the United States with those in Europe because U.S. institutions of higher education and policy operate differently from the ones in Europe.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate in a Study and Consent Form

Dear Students,

My name is Siranush (Anush) Chubaryan. I am a doctoral candidate from the University of South Carolina. My major field of study is Educational Leadership. I am conducting a dissertation research entitled "The Experience of Muslim Migrant Students in European Higher Educational Institutions." This study investigates the influence of higher education on the integration of Muslim students from migrant background into French, German and Armenian society. Migrant students from Muslim background are considered a minority in Europe. The present research seeks to understand what happens to the social and religious identities of Muslim students, and whether those identities change while they reside and study in Europe. While focusing on a minority student population, it is important to emphasize the role of education in the process of identity formation and social integration (i.e. integration into the mainstream of society). This research also focuses on the influence of education on Muslim students' civic integration.

To be able to conduct my research and understand the situation with Muslim immigrant students in more depth, I am looking for Muslim students from migrant backgrounds, residing in France, Germany and Armenia, who will be willing to participate in my project and share their stories with me. I will be using two main sources

to gather data for my research: personal interviews with student-participants and their written reflections.

To be more specific I should mention that I am planning to conduct three series of individual interviews. I will conduct the first series of individual interviews via Skype, which will allow us to get to know each other better. The second and third series of individual interviews will be conducted in person, and I will travel to France, Germany and Armenia to meet with you in person and hear your stories on your experiences in European higher educational institutions. Each interview should last 45 and 90 minutes. The interviews will take place at a time and location you and I agree on. All three series of interviews will be recorded for my future data analysis. All information gathered during the interviews will be strictly confidential. I will be the only person who can access your interview data. When all three series of interviews are over, I will provide all of you with an opportunity to share your stories in a written format, which can make my data richer and more detailed in content.

Your participation is voluntary. Your involvement is important for me as it will bring important insights and valuable perspective to this stud. If you decide to participate in this research, you should know that the study does not include any significant risk to you. You should also know that during the interviews you will not be required to answer any questions that might make you feel uncomfortable. Participation may be terminated at any time. If for any reason you wish to no longer participate in the study, simply inform me by email.

Once again, I would like to say that your stories will shed light to many problematic issues researched in this study. Thank you very much for consideration.

Should you have any questions regarding my research, or if you would like to participate,

do not hesitate to contact me via email.

Warm regards,

Siranush Chubaryan

Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership

Wardlaw College of Education

anushchubaryan@gmail.com

I have read the contents of this consent form. I give my consent

to participant in this study. I have received a copy of this form for my

records and future reference.

_____ _____

Signature of Study Participant   Date

_____ _____

Printed Name of Study Participant   Date

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

_____ _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

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Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

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Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

Appendix B

Interview 1 Protocol

Interview 1

Life Before and After Migration

In this interview I will be asking you to focus on your identity. I want you to think about your religious as well as social identity before and after immigrating to Europe. This might include things like: your childhood, your family background, friends and relatives you interacted with, neighborhood where you lived and currently live, changes you have noticed about yourself after immigrating to Europe. We will start with discussing your childhood and your experiences as a child.

Part 1: Family Background and Childhood

1. Let's start talking about your background. If you don't mind could you tell me about your family?

    a. Where did you grow up?

    b. What was the profession of your parents?

    c. Was your family religious?

    d. Do you have any siblings?

    e. What was the most important value for your family? Please, explain why.

    f. What kind of neighborhood did you live in?

    g. Were you communicative and sociable as a child?

Part 2: Identity

2. Let's move on and discuss questions related to your identity, both religious and social, and aspects which could have influence on the formation of your identity

   a. Were you religious as a child? Please, be specific and descriptive.

   b. Did your parents encourage your involvement in religious practice?

   c. Can you describe what religion was for you when you were younger?

   d. Did you have many friends as a child? If "yes," can you describe the friends you mostly interacted with? If "no," can you tell me the reasons behind not interacting with other children?

   e. In terms of nationality how did you identify yourself as a child? How do you identify yourself now?

   f. How do you understand the aspect of social identity? What does social identity mean?

Part 3: Shifts in Identity

3. Now I think we should talk about your life in Europe. I would like to know if you feel any changes or shifts both, in your religious and social identity after migrating to Europe.

   a. Can you tell me about the reasons that brought you and your family to Europe?

   b. How long have you been in Europe?

   c. Do you feel like anything has changed in you or even maybe you have changed as a person after migrating to Europe?

   d. What has changed in terms of your religious identity?

e. Do you see any changes or shifts in your religious identity?

f. What has changed in terms of your social identity?

g. How do you understand yourself within the European context of identity? How does that understanding relate to how you perceived your identity in back in your country?

a. Do you have any European (local) non- Muslim friends?

b. Can you tell me if it is easy for you to interact with locals? Please, be specific.

c. What do you think about locals' attitude towards you?

d. Do you consider yourself integrated into European society? Please, explain your answer in detail.

Appendix C

Interview 2 Protocol

Interview 2

Student's Experience with European Education

I am glad that during our second round of interviews I get to see you in person, which, I think, makes our communication easier. Last time we talked about your family background, the country where you grew, the worldviews your family valued the most, which could possibly influence the formation of your identity. We also discussed notions of religious and social identity. We talked about your own religious and social identity in your home country and the changes your social and religious identities have undergone after migrating to Europe. In this interview I will be asking you questions related to your experiences in your respective higher educational institution. We will be discussing your student life, whether or not you feel integrated into your institutional environment, and what integration means to you.

Part 1: Education Background

4. Let's start by discussing your field of study, also your educational goals as well as aspirations.

    a. What made you choose this specific field of study or in other words your profession?

    b. What are your main educational goals?

  c. Do you think your profession can open many prospects for you in future?

    Please, explain.

  d. Do you plan to continue your education after graduating from this

    institution? Why or why not?

Part 2: Life of Students from Muslim Backgrounds at European Universities

 5. Now let's focus on your experiences inside your higher educational institution.

  a. Are you fluent in local language? If so, what language do you speak most of

    the time: your mother tongue or the language of the country of your

    residence?

  b. In general, when you think about life in your higher educational institution,

    what do you think about?

  c. Where do you get those perceptions?

  d. Are you exposed to different groups of people in your institution?

  e. Is there any specific group that welcomes you more than another group?

  f. Are there any cultural differences that can become obstacles for you while

    you are a student here?

Part 3: Integration

 6. Now we should talk about the notion of integration. I want you to focus on

  integration and try to explain to me what exactly is integration for you and

  whether you feel integrated into your institutional environment

  a. Please explain, what is integration or being integrated for you?

  b. Do you communicate with local non -Muslim European students and do you

    have friends among them? Why or why not?

c. Do you limit your communication with local non-Muslim students? Why or why not?

d. Do you think that culture or religion can become an obstacle for you in your integration process?

e. What bothers you the most during your integration process? Please, explain and try to be specific.

f. What is the key to being well-integrated into your university environment?

g. Do you think your integration into your institutional environment can help you to better integrate into society in general? Please, explain your answer.

Appendix D

Interview 3 Protocol

Interview 3

This will be our third and final round of interviews, after which I will send you the analyzed data of all three interviews for your review and feedback. Also, I will ask you to write reflections around the questions we went through during those interviews. So, during the first two interviews we talked about your childhood, background, identity, both social and religious. We discussed your immigration to Europe and talked about possible changes in your identity. We also went through some questions related to your education in Europe, more specifically we were looking at how integrated you feel in your own institutional environment, as well as what problems you face during your integration process. This final set of questions is again related to your education in higher educational institution. We will talk about your perception of higher education in Europe. I would like you to focus on and voice some problems or issues, which you think should be changed in current educational policy in order to promote your integration process into your institutional environment and consequently into European society.

Part 1: Educational Policy

1. I would like you to think about the educational policy. I want you to tell me your opinion on Bologna Process as well as your opinion about this policy.

   a. What do you know about Bologna process?

   b. What positive as well as negative aspects do you see in Bologna Process?

c. Do you think Bologna Process promotes your integration into educational environment? Why or why not?

Part 2: Suggestions

2. I want you to think about changes you would make in Bologna Process, after which I would like you to voice your suggestions.

a. What would you change about this policy?

b. Can you make any specific suggestions that you think would be beneficial for better integration of immigrant students into educational environment?

c. Do you think that integration into educational environment can also promote integration into society in general? Please, be specific.

Part 3: Conclusion

3. Finally, I want you to think about issues or aspects that are important to you and you forgot to mention during our interviews.

a. Tell me something you think I should know that I haven't asked you about.

b. Ask me questions and I will be glad to answer.

Appendix E

Student Data

Student Name	Viola	Ahmed	Sasan	Erdi	Mayana	Said	Jhoka	Khaled	Amal
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Country of Origin	Uzbekistan	Egypt	Iran	Turkey	Iraq	Lebanon	Yemen	Algeria	Morocco
Year of migration to Europe	2007	2011	2011	Born in Germany	2002	2010	2012	2004	2010
Host European Country	Armenia	Armenia	Armenia	Germany	Germany	Germany	France	France	France
University	Yerevan State	Yerevan State	Yerevan State	Frankfurt am Main	Frankfurt am Main	Frankfurt Am Main	Science Po Menton	Science Po Menton	Science Po Menton
Major Field of Study	Economics	History	Biology	Physics	Psychology	Philosophy	Prep	History of Middle East	Politics
Year of Interview	2014	2015	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014