

The Centre of Islamic studies seeks to develop a constructive and critical understanding of Islam in the modern world. Its priority is to develop high-quality research and outreach programmes about Islam in the United Kingdom and Europe. Through its roster of scholarship, symposia, reports and interactive educational events, the Centre is committed to engaging with academics, policy-makers and wider society.

This edited collection presents a range of topical essays on Islam and Muslims in Europe. The product of the University of Cambridge Centre of Islamic Studies' first graduate symposium, it tackles issues ranging from burial rituals to the halal economy, minority fiqh to hip-hop, psychological therapy to hate crime. The collection affords a perspective on Islam that is transnational in scope – exploring historical and contemporary connections that cross Europe and Asia – while recognising that the "Islamic" is always embedded in local environments and social worlds. Taken together, these essays attest to the diverse ways that ideas and forms of life associated with Islam have become increasingly important across many areas to those of Muslim background, and to others too. The introduction and concluding essays by senior academics and thinkers offer insightful reflections on the relationship between "Islam", reflexivity, and the possibility for creative rethinking of social issues in the UK and Europe.

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Muslims in the UK and Europe • I



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edited by

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MUSLIMS IN THE UK AND EUROPE I



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FOREWORD

THE CENTRE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES (CIS) at the University of Cambridge held its first Graduate Symposium on the subject of ‘Muslims in the UK and Europe’ from the 17 – 18 May, 2014. The aim of this first Symposium was to bring graduate students from British, European and American universities together to present their research to their peers, discuss their findings and engage in debate about the issues that face Muslims in the European context, with special emphasis on the UK. Two scholars of Islam, Professor Maurits Berger of Leiden University and Dr Jeremy Henzell-Thomas of the Centre of Islamic Studies, acted as mentors and commentators. In addition, two keynote speakers addressed major issues in the British and European contexts: Costas Gabrielatos on representations of Islam in the British press from a corpus-linguistics perspective and Esra Ozyurek on Race, Religion, and Conversion in the New Europe.

The papers in this volume are expanded versions of the contributions made at the Symposium. They are presented here with little editorial intervention. Instead of forcing them into thematic sections, I have chosen to present them alphabetically following the authors’ names. The last two papers in the volume are by the two mentors. They provide commentary on the symposium as a whole, as well as some reflections on the study of Muslims in Europe more generally.

Contrary to expectations, very few of the abstracts CIS received, more than 150 in total, focused on Islam as faith or religion. Does this suggest that young scholars in Europe are converging on Islam and Muslims from a social science perspective rather than from the viewpoint of theology or comparative religion? It is too early to come to a conclusion, especially considering the Symposium was inclined towards the social sciences. Matters of doctrine were part of the background in the abstracts and at the Symposium, but they were not the main themes. This focus on Muslims’ lived experiences, signals that interest in Islam and Muslims is no longer confined to the faculties of Divinity, Oriental or Middle Eastern Studies in the European academy. In fact, Muslims, as subjects of scholarly interest, seem to have migrated out of these traditional domains in the humanities to the social sciences, with the majority of scholars nowadays employed in departments of anthropology, politics, international relations, media and cultural studies. This new reality justifies,

in my view, describing this shift as a *social science turn* in the scholarly engagement with Islam and Muslims, not just in the West but, I venture to add, elsewhere, at least outside Muslim-majority countries.

Another interesting fact about this Symposium was the small number of abstracts CIS received that focused on securitisation with its matrix of subjects in extremism, radicalisation, violence, de-radicalisation or terrorism. This was surprising considering the insatiable interest in these topics in the media and public sphere at large. It would be a folly, owing to the relatively small number of abstracts, to conclude that the above topics do not seem to resonate as much with younger scholars as one might have expected. However, if true, is this because young scholars believe that the security agenda is politically inflected on all sides, and that it is therefore hard to have confidence in such data in the academy? Or is it the case that young scholars believe that the use of faith in the political arena is in fact a proxy for issues that lie beyond faith? Might the fact that not a single abstract on inter-faith dialogue was submitted to the Symposium be an expression of this reading of faith as a proxy for extra-faith concerns? And, is the relative absence of the above themes in abstracts submitted to the Symposium indicative of a research aesthetic that is resistant to the imperatives of policymakers, in spite of the fact that they hold the purse strings and can therefore influence research funding in myriad ways?

In responding to these questions my hunch is that if young scholars are indeed shying away from securitisation and its associated themes, it is because they do not believe that securitisation and faith are two faces of the same coin. To continue: could the relation of securitisation to faith be based on a fundamental mismatch between faith and security? Faith does provide the discursive resources that frame issues which security specialists find deeply threatening to national security, but is this the same as saying that faith, like a faulty chromosome, is the cause of threats to national security? This is a tantalising question which I hope future graduate students will refine and explore to help provide a better understanding of the all too facile assumption that faith and security are in a dialectic relation in the Muslim context.

The papers in this volume deal with a diverse set of topics. These include conversion in and out of Islam, transnational Islamophobia and 'everyday' hate crime, racism, identity construction, countering representations of Muslims in the media and the public sphere, the hijab, faith in mental health practice, secularism and belief, Sufism, travel and the call to Islam, animal

welfare and the ethics of food consumption, the role of music in education and repatriation of human bodies to countries of origin. Some of the papers may be read in conjunction with each other, the guide for this being noted in their titles. For example, conversion and Islamophobia appear respectively in the titles of a few papers which can then be read in unison. With regard to the former, the volume presents, for the first time, figures for conversion out of Islam in the UK based on the 2011 Scottish census (Brice). The idea that some new Muslims, having converted to Islam, may see the adoption of Salafism as a kind of conversion *within* conversion is a novel idea (Inge). May we call this phenomenon *intra-conversion* (my term)? Would this form of conversion challenge the dominance in the literature of what may be called *inter-conversion*, wherein the convert comes from another faith or no-faith background rather than from within Islam itself? Are the two types of conversion recognised as similar doctrinally or experientially by those who convert?

The papers on Islamophobia provide three interesting angles on this much discussed topic: a way of understanding the link with self-esteem in a comparative perspective with anti-Semitism (Mehmood); operationalising the concept to include low-level or 'everyday' hate crime that goes unrecorded in official statistics for a variety of reasons (Hargreaves); and transnational Islamophobia, or what is called 'Islamophobia on the move' (Gawlewicz and Narkowicz). Transnational Islamophobia is directly linked to migration flows and globalisation. Thus, communities which in the past may not have experienced Islamophobia develop this condition through indirect contact with other 'infected' communities. Intermediaries, normally migrants, develop the condition in their new environments and transmit it to their old communities. Transnational Islamophobia reveals the pervasive nature of this condition throughout the West, aided and abetted no doubt by the power of globalised media. As a result, challenging Islamophobia may prove to be much harder than people think: once Islamophobia starts to move more or less freely among nations it becomes like a 'contagion' that is very difficult to counter and control. The emergence of Muslim counterpublics in Germany to challenge mainstream views in the media is an attempt to respond to this state of affairs (Soliman), illustrating that the mainstream public sphere is not monolithic, but allows for variation and contestation. While this is true, it remains to be seen whether this emerging counterpublic can stem Islamophobic trends in society.

The securitisation of Muslims in Europe has been alluded to above. The treatment of Muslims in Austria as a security threat is shown to be actively promoted by right-wing political parties for self-serving advantage (Sereghy). The normative nature of this stance in the political arena is shared, through acquiescence or low-level intensity participation, by liberal-leaning politicians and intellectuals. The belief that Muslims are a threat has become a normative stance to such an extent that Islamophobia and the sceptre of security have started to pass in society as items of a taken-for-granted ideology of difference and threat. In the UK, this ideology seems to have appeared under a different guise: that of social cohesion. While there is no doubt that official British policy aims to enhance cohesion in society between Muslims and others, it is equally incontestable that this policy is driven more by security considerations than the desire to aid social cohesion as a target in and itself (Fitzgerald). However, social cohesion, or similar policy platforms, needs community agents or activists to do its work from the inside. The emergence of Muslim Faith-Based Organisations (FBIOs) as satellite civil society intermediaries reveals the power of policymakers, through different forms of co-option, to implement policy; but it may also reveal the power of those same agents/actors to resist government policy by stalling or exploiting the dependency of policymakers on community gate-keepers. Vulnerability in times of stress cuts both ways: top-down and bottom-up, although the balance of power is inordinately in the hands of the former.

Women in Islam have always been a subject of great interest in the Western academy. Using contemporary theory to challenge traditional feminist representations, papers in this volume reveal that the active espousal of Islam as a marker of identity does not demand surrendering to culturalist interpretations of the faith. The adoption of Salafism among convert women in London does not lead to accepting traditional male-dominated norms (Inge). The wearing of the hijab by Muslim women is not synonymous with abandoning freedom of choice (Sadar). It is an *active choice* through which the wearer sets out to do things in society. Nor does it have to clash with a woman's career in avenues that are traditionally dominated by overt sexuality such as the music industry. 'Poetic Pilgrimage' is a case in point (Khan). This hip-hop group, consisting of two convert women, sets out to challenge the norms of both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The very act of music-making challenges the views of some Muslims; this also being an issue of interest to, and cause of controversy among, Muslims in the educational sphere (Bham). The abiding point in most of this is the struggle among

Muslim women to develop forms of consciousness that are expressive of who they are (Hassan). This is not an easy task considering the dominance of secularism, or anti-faith forms of it, in Western societies. The impact of secularism is further felt in mental health practice which, in its traditional form, does not afford faith a place in regimes of patient treatment (Betteridge). One must, however, tread lightly when it comes to secularism owing to its fluid nature. In some interpretations, secularism may in fact be argued to provide a space for religious belief in the public sphere (Raza).

I have tried as best I can above to identify the major thematic trajectories in this volume. I have also tried to connect these to other concerns that, while not central to these themes, can help us capture connections to other ideas or practices among Muslims in European societies. That being said, I would be loath to end this Foreword without highlighting the contributions made by the remaining papers in this volume. Sufism is one of the most attractive expressions of Islam to Western converts. The path of spirituality at the heart of Sufi orders is believed to provide a counterpoint to the materialism and consumerism of Western societies. However, not all forms of Sufism can survive and prosper in the West (Abo-Alabbas). Ethnic-bound forms of Sufism experience the greatest challenges in the battle for survival. Universalist orders are more adept at survival because of their greater ability to change and adapt to their new environments. These Orders consider adapting a necessary concession if they are to remain true to their aim of drawing new converts to Islam. The search for augmenting Islam in the West through adaptation to new conditions is attested in the work of *Tablīghī Jamā'at* whose tight-knit and scattered followers act as bridges to spread the reach of the group to new communities and contexts as well as to maintaining old ties (Timol).

In spite of the 'bad press' that surrounds Islam in the West, including the practice of the slaughter of animals for halal food, the injunction to take good care of all God's creatures, including animals for food, has found champions among Muslims in the UK. The call on Muslims to consume wholesome food (*tayyib*) provides a higher ethical test of care for animals than the narrow interpretation associated with halal (Corbet). This call has led to the development of farms with modes of rearing and care that are consistent with the highest ethical standards. Could such a practice help dispel some of the negative reporting about Islam and Muslims in the West? This is highly doubtful owing to the thick mists of negativity that surround Muslims in the West.

In spite of the fact that generations of Muslims have grown up in the West, the attachment to places of heritage continues to exist. This is apparent in the schemes found among Germans of Turkish origin where a person may enlist in a scheme of body repatriation after death for burial in Turkey (Balkan). Acting like insurance policies that pay for funeral services in Western countries, these schemes, and the wishes that underpin them, signal the in-betweenness of migrant Muslim communities in the West and, it may be argued, their dual loyalties to places that mean different things to them. This in-betweenness is structurally and functionally similar to that of converts to Islam who, Janus-like, look in different directions of familiarity and estrangement at the same time.

The diversity within Islam doctrinally and intellectually is a recurrent theme among Muslims that ought to counter homogenising representations in the media. Diversity can be found within the same group, for example followers of the different Sunni legal schools, or among different groups. The Ismailis offer an excellent example of this doctrinal and intellectual differentiation within Islam (Magout). Having experienced marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination throughout their history, the Ismailis have in recent years developed a framework which, while critiquing secularism and Islamic fundamentalism in equal measure, has resorted to culture and civilisation as mediating concepts for the expression of faith in the public sphere.

Method was a major concern at the Symposium. Most of the papers applied a qualitative methodology of ethnographic study through participant observation, extensive field-note taking, case studies and interviews. Quantitative methodology was followed in two papers (Brice and Hargreaves). One paper applied a participatory action research framework (Barry) to explore responses among Muslims to far-right activism. This method, we are told, allows the subject to develop their own response portfolio to the issue under investigation with little intervention from the researcher. Using this portfolio as a kind of prompt, the researcher tries to elicit data of different kinds that tap deep emotional states. That being said, no one method can claim to be the sole key that can unlock the pools of data that the study of Muslims in Europe demands. Quantitative methodology may be good at describing an empirical terrain, but it may not be as effective as qualitative approaches at generating explanations and interpretations that can give deep meaning to those data. Participatory action research can dig deep into layers of meaning, but it may be handicapped by the fact that it is time-consuming and demands

a high level of engagement from subjects which not everyone can provide. The key concept therefore must be that of methodological multiplicity rather than methodological singularity.

One of the inadequacies of this Foreword is its inability to capture the atmosphere at the Symposium. The participants approached the event with a great positive spirit: learning from each other, but challenging each other; offering praise, but also providing penetrating critique; and displaying erudition, but couching it in doubt. There were many moments of fun, but also a few moments of panic. Most speakers timed their presentations to perfection, but others struggled to stick to the limit. Some speakers spent most of their allotted time rehearsing theory, but others despatched themselves to the task in hand with alacrity. It may be asked but isn't that what happens at most conferences? Yes it is, but there was no defensiveness, grandstanding or smugness here. Instead, the Symposium was dominated by an atmosphere of openness and sharing as well as the readiness to laugh at others' technological mishaps as heartily as one's own. The fact that the sun was shining during the Symposium and the location was what one would expect of Cambridge might have had something to do with this atmosphere of conviviality, but I guess only in small measure. The participants made the Symposium the enjoyable experience it was. To each and every one of them I extend a big 'thank you.'

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Sufism in Britain: How Sufi Orders have Adapted to a Western Context

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Abstract

Sufi orders are unique communities in terms of structure, theologies and the ability to adapt to new contexts. This paper explores how Sufi orders adapt to, and establish themselves in a Western context by comparing two orders, The Naqshabandī-Ḥaqqānī and the Shādhilī-ʿAlawī, as contrasting examples. This paper shows that orders bound up by ethnic identities and traditions fail to fully accustom themselves to the new environment of their adopted home. They therefore do not succeed in securing followings and eventually evaporate or at least have less representation within Sufi circles and Muslim communities at large. By contrast, new orders that consider themselves to be universal maintain a greater ability to adapt to Western contexts and represent the most possible tolerance towards Western environments while still upholding strong attitudes towards converting non-Muslims to Islam. The intensive theological and liberal rethinking among these orders may result in compromises on the part of Islamic teachings and traditional practices while setting the ground for them in Europe.

Britain is perhaps recognized as having the strongest Sufi presence in Western Europe, second only to France.¹ In Western Europe, particularly Britain, there are a number of Sufi orders centered on local masters or leaders, which have links to other orders and saints in different parts of the world. Most of these orders trace their origins back to the Indian subcontinent² and North Africa since the migrants who brought Sufism to Britain came mostly from South Asia and North Africa.³ The way that the orders developed and defined themselves in Britain is perhaps best described in the following words:

Many of the orders have developed as localized groups with strong loyalties to a particular family tradition imbued with sanctity through their lineal association with a deceased saint. The unique customs, the presence of influential leaders related to the family of the saint, and new sacred spaces in Britain linked to the original shrine help to maintain a connection to the history and geography of a sanctified place of origin.⁴

Sufism exceeds the boundaries of ethnicities and geographies and many believe it can serve as a bridge between Islam and the West as Sufism, they claim, transcends the frontiers of religions.⁵ It has ‘the capacity to expand

across boundaries while remaining local and even parochial,' to recognize its vast scope while maintaining local practice.⁶

This paper compares two offshoots of two Sufi orders, highlighting how they adapt and establish themselves in a Western context. It explores the Ḥaqqāniyya branch of the Naqshabandiyya, one of the largest and most widely spread orders in Europe, as a case example of a transnational Sufi order that has accustomed itself well to a Western environment. The 'Alawiyya branch of the Shādhiliyya is taken as a case example of orders that are bound up with ethnic identity and maintain the traditions practiced of their places of origin. It is important to avoid making sweeping generalizations about Sufi orders in Europe which result from overlooking the diverse nature and the backgrounds of their organizations and communities. This is particularly relevant to the 'Alawī order as we shall notice below. Therefore, this paper offers an insight into the factors that impact how these orders acclimatize themselves to Western societies, and emphasizes comparative studies on Sufi orders.

The Haqqaniyya Order

The Ḥaqqāniyya order traces its origin through its founder Nā'im al-Ḥaqqānī (d. 2014)⁷ to a branch of the Naqshabandiyya⁸ in Dagestan, and later rooted in Lebanon before travelling to Britain, its first base.⁹ The order started in London in 1974 and later established various groups and centers in many parts of the country consisting of Muslims of immigrant origin and a considerable number of converts.¹⁰ Al-Ḥaqqānī's, as a leading authority in Islamic law, was considerably able to attract numerous followers in Europe, of whom Turkish Cypriots form a substantial number.¹¹ His undoubted charisma allowed him to expand outside his ethnic base among the Turkish-Cypriot Muslim Community in London and attract young British-born Pakistanis and converts from Western 'truth seekers.'¹²

Financial support from the Sultan of Brunei helped establish the main center in London where al-Ḥaqqānī used to have his regular meetings and gatherings especially during Ramadan.¹³ Outside London, the two groups in Sheffield and Birmingham have been the largest. The former consists of membership from South Asians, Turks, African-Caribbean and white European converts and is quite open to many forms of spirituality that might

involve non-Muslims.¹⁴ In contrast, the group in Birmingham has a largely South Asian membership.¹⁵

As a consequence of al-Ḥaqqānī's failed prediction of the coming of the Mahdī, a number of his leading disciples abandoned the order, becoming strong adversaries to it. As a result, the order split into smaller groupings following senior leaders, each of whom organizes separate *dhikr* meetings. In Sheffield's group, there was dispute over its administration, leading to various groups then gathering for their own meetings and *dhikr* at different times.

In 1999, al-Ḥaqqānī visited the city of Glastonbury which has been a center for religious cults for centuries especially for pre-Christian and modern pagan ones. During his visit he declared the city to be the 'spiritual heart of Britain'.¹⁶ The order centers itself in the city around a charity shop set up by a woman on the instructions of Nā'im during his visit to the city. It is evident that the Ḥaqqāniyya in Glastonbury orients itself towards a form of Sufism that transcends Islam,¹⁷ more importantly, "... engaging with the whole quasi-Christian discourse of a Celtic church which is Unitarian rather than Trinitarian,"¹⁸ which upholds Muslim notions of Oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). In this sense, it approaches other religious communities in the town by associating its practices with Sufism rather than Islam, portraying *dhikr*, for instance, as 'Sufi meditation',¹⁹ and permitting the performance of the whirling of Rūmī tradition and the use of music.²⁰ Such practices became part of the order's *dhikr* gatherings except in groups formed by traditional communities such as Sufis of South Asian background as the case is in Birmingham.

The 'Alawī Order

The 'Alawī order in Britain traces its origins back to its founder in North Africa, Aḥmad al-'Alawī (d. 1934).²¹ The appearance of the 'Alawī order in Britain has strong connections with the emergence of Yemenis who settled in a number of port cities by the end of the WWI.²² Several attempts were made to establish a center of religious instruction for Yemeni communities but it was the arrival of 'Abdullāh al-Ḥakīmī that galvanized the Yemeni community towards religiosity and organization under the inspiration of the 'Alawī order. Under his guidance, several Sufi oratories (sing. *zāwiya*, pl. *zawāyā*) were established in a number of cities in the UK including Cardiff, South Shields, Hull and Liverpool.²³ Other 'Alawī centres were opened in Manchester and Birmingham.²⁴

The ‘Alawī order had no central authority to organize itself at the national level. Each regional organization functioned separately. However, the order maintained close contact with the main center in North Africa through regular visits to Algeria where the tomb of the founder of the order remains. Al-Ḥakīmī’s importance to the ‘Alawī order and the Yemeni community cannot be overstated, similar to al-Ḥaqqānī for the Ḥaqqāniyya. His activities transformed the Yemeni community from an isolated, encapsulated, and divided one into a visible one that is well-organized religiously, socially active and self-confident, although still “dealing with the wider community in a selective fashion”.²⁵

Al-Ḥakīmī’s involvement in political disruptions back in Yemen raised considerable opposition from Yemenis in Cardiff and he eventually had to leave, losing his leadership to Ḥasan Ismā‘īl, his former deputy in the ‘Alawī Society.²⁶ After al-Ḥakīmī’s departure from Britain, the ‘Alawī order continued its activities but in a less lively way, leading to a decline which we can relate to several reasons. First, al-Ḥakīmī’s enthusiasm for educating women and providing them space in which they were allowed to perform the *dhikr* may have been alien to the Yemeni community and was met with discomfort and opposition.²⁷ Secondly, Sufi practices such as *dhikr* may have had limited appeal within the growing Yemeni communities influenced by vivid the opposition from groups that came to Britain after WWII, who were themselves influenced by the modern reformist movements such as the Salafiyya.²⁸ Thirdly, the growth of the Muslim community involving many ethnicities, different practices and Sufi loyalties has weakened the particular teachings of the ‘Alawī order.

Two Approaches

In terms of religious instruction and teachings, the Ḥaqqāniyya puts exceptional emphasis on the role that new Muslim communities in the West would play in the millennial events perceived to come. The masters of the Ḥaqqāniyya speak to their American and European followers about Armageddon, World War III, the Anti-Christ and the Saviour. Over the last three decades, the order has shown great interest in the idea of millennialism:

The order’s consistent interest in the end of this world, the Mahdī, and the ‘Signs of the Hour’ is exceptional among Sunni mystical orders.... [As in] the context of North America and Western Europe, the order has been able to unite traditional Sunni ideas of the ‘Last Day’ with the millennial expectations of a new generation of European and American converts to Islam.²⁹

The Ḥaqqānī masters claim that Jesus, the Mahdī and the Dajjāl are alive now and a global conflict is forthcoming, in which the new communities of Muslim converts in Western Europe and North America will play a significant role. In addition, the hadith in which the Prophet declares that the sun will rise from the West at the end of the world is interpreted to refer specifically to these new convert communities in North America and Western Europe,³⁰ a supposition that goes beyond the evident meaning of the report.

The role of the Internet is significant to the Ḥaqqānī order in terms of religious instruction and teachings as it makes the order more accessible to their target audiences. The use of the web-based resources has an advantage, for instance, the geographically separated disciples of the order can share a common online experience that provides a sense of religious community that would not exist without the order's significant presence on the World Wide Web.³¹

On the other hand, the 'Alawī order has taught little about millennialism and the end of the world in contrast to the Ḥaqqānī order which takes millennialism and the New Age as central themes in its teachings. This is in fact a prime device for attracting followers for the Ḥaqqāniyya especially among non-Muslims. The 'Alawiyya has always been interested in maintaining the original identity and shape of its community more than directing its interest towards controversial issues. The 'Alawī order has tended towards more traditional teachings. For instance, women were not permitted to participate in festivals and were only allowed to observe the procession.³² Under al-Ḥakīmī's authority, women were provided a separate space for *dhikr* and education as he dedicated special efforts toward educating women, especially the British wives of the Yemeni in South Shields.³³ However, this was met with discomfort and opposition from the Yemeni immigrants who perceived these attitudes as foreign to their norms.

Although only initiates of the order were participants in *dhikr* proceedings, non-members of the order and non-Muslims were allowed to attend as a means to attract them to the 'Alawī order.³⁴ While stressing the significance of open attitudes to other religions and emphasizing that Muslims could learn from other faiths and communities, al-Ḥakīmī maintained strong beliefs that Islam is the right path, contrary to what Halliday has surmised. Halliday apparently has presumed that the purpose of al-Ḥakīmī's book *dīnu-llahī wāḥid* (The Religion of God Is One) was to promote *unification of all*

religions.³⁵ Halliday based his conjecture on a statement made by al-Ḥakīm himself that in this book he “... endeavored to bring closer together the religions of Muslims and Christians and others...”³⁶ In fact, al-Ḥakīm in this book (and another entitled *Questions and Answers Between Christianity and Islam*), while he *did* promote interfaith dialogue, maintained that Islam is the right path—the religion of the past and the present—referring to the Qur’an which maintains that all prophets are essentially Muslim in belief.³⁷

In comparing these two orders it can be demonstrated that Sufi orders in a European context have different approaches to the society and the wider environment in which they live. The Ḥaqqānī order’s universalistic approach to Europeans and followers of other religions is evident in its extensive discussions of the millennial and New Age apocalyptic ideas, and the use of music to attract these audiences, acclimatizing its practices according to the context in the hope of stabilization and conversion of non-Muslims. A comparative study of the order in three different countries by Nielsen and others confirms this. The transnational Sufi orders maintain that Sufism transcends the boundaries of religion and ethnicity; a person may be a Sufi without being Muslim. Still, in the case of the Ḥaqqāniyya, although showing a great tendency towards universal Sufism, it maintains close ties with traditional Sufism and Islam. It breaks the boundaries to attract non-Muslim to Sufi Islam, *not* to leave the boundary of religion.

These orders show a great ability of adaptation to the Western contexts. One of the important aspects associated with this type is the relationship between the sexes. In themes of organization and structure, as these groups strive to establish themselves in the West and attract non-Muslims, we witness changes in gender roles, such as mixing between the sexes, and appointing Muslim-female leaders. The separation between men and women during the meetings of *dhikr* when the group is led by Pakistanis shows that Sufi orders accustom themselves to the environment and the traditions of the individual communities.

Ethnically-bound Sufi orders strictly adhere to homeland practices as has been shown in the ‘Alawiyya order which has maintained a strong loyalty to Yemeni traditions. While it might be argued that this may be particular to the Yemeni community, it does not explain the failure of other ethnic orders to attract large European followings, nor does it explain the success of the Ḥaqqāniyya which is ethnically unbounded as has been shown earlier. Even if it is a

particular case with the Yemeni community, it mainly illustrates the extent to which Sufi orders that do not go beyond the boundaries of ethnicity fail in attracting other communities and as such fail to thrive and maintain their ground.

To emphasize this point, while Sufism came to flourish among European Muslims again following the 9/11 events, the 'Alawī order failed to thrive in Britain and the particular legacy of al-Ḥakīmī has almost faded away. In maintaining a sharp distinction between the UK branch and branches of the 'Alawiyya in other European countries, it can be stressed that the order in Britain lost its ground owing to the above-mentioned reasons but also largely due to its failure to adopt European values. On the other hand, the 'Alawī order now has large followings in France and Germany resulting mainly from significant transformations in terms of doctrine and method introduced by its current master, Khaled Bentounes, who is European educated.³⁸ Thus, the order in Germany is quite similar to the Ḥaqqāniyya in its accommodative nature towards women, mixing of the sexes, and the membership of non-Muslims. This explains the success of the order in Germany and France and its failure in Britain. Further comparisons would be welcome to contribute to our understanding of the factors that cause the failure of ethnic orders in Europe. Until then, it can be said that this breakdown is largely related to being ethnically restricted and falling short in relating to European traditions.

Marta Dominguez-Diaz has argued in her examination of the Budshishiyya in Britain that although turning transnational, it has developed a distinct pattern of development in the local milieu.³⁹ This current study has shown the contrary in regards to the Ḥaqqāniyya which tends to accommodate forms of spirituality foreign to Islamic teachings. The intensive theological and liberal rethinking among transnational Sufi orders may result in compromises on the part of Islamic teachings and traditional practices while setting ground for these orders in European environments. This is also noticeable in the transformation of the 'Alawī order which has shifted from one that is focused on traditional teachings in Britain, to one that is more open towards European life-styles in Germany.

Conclusion

As has been generally recognized by modern research, Sufi orders started in Britain as a means to organize migrant Muslim communities under Sufi

beliefs and practices but by the 1990s they began to escape the confines of ethnicity and locality towards a transnational form of mysticism.⁴⁰ Newly formed UK orders such as the Ḥaqqāniyya are more open towards European customs than those that started at an earlier stage such as the ‘Alawiyya. We can witness that while universalist orders are growing, ethnic orders are shrinking.

It would be interesting to see how this applies to the larger Muslim communities in Europe and their discourses of integration within European environments and also how these discourses change with successive generations. It would also be interesting to see how the Salafi version of ‘pure Islam *vis-à-vis* traditional Islam’⁴¹ impacts upon representation of Sufis and Muslims at large in the UK and Europe. As we have seen with the ‘Alawī order, Sufism in Britain has been weakened by criticisms from the Salafis but, as observed by Ron Geaves,⁴² this has been challenged through the work of transnational orders, especially the Ḥaqqāniyya, that unite different Sufi loyalties under the banner of Traditional Islam in their rally against Salafism.

Notes

¹ David Westerlund, “The contextualization of Sufism in Europe” in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, ed. David Westerlund (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 13. For a general history and exploration of Sufism in Britain, see Ron Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain: An Exploration of Muslim Identity*, (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2000); Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg, *Sufism Today: Heritage and Tradition in the Global Community*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

² Pnina Werbner, “Seekers on the path: different ways of being a Sufi in Britain” in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Jamal Malik and John Hinnells, (London: Routledge, 2006), 128.

³ Westerlund, *Contextualization*, 13.

⁴ Geaves, *Sufis of Britain*, 99.

⁵ Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?*, (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), chapter 2; idem, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edn., (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971) 34; Tomas Gerholm, “Two Muslim intellectuals in the postmodern West, Akbar Ahmed and Ziauddin Sardar” in *Islam, Globalization, and Postmodernity*, ed. Akbar Ahmed and Hastings Donnan, (London: Routledge, 1994), 207.

⁶ Werbner, *Seekers*, 128.

⁷ Al-Ḥaqqānī passed away on 7th May 2014 and his son who was named successor by his father is now in charge of the order.

⁸ It was founded by Bahā’ ad-Din Naqshaband in Central Asia in the 14th century, David Damrel, “Aspects of the Naqshabandī Ḥaqqānī order in North America” in *Sufism in the West*, 116.

⁹ Jorgen Nielsen, *et. al.*, “Transnational Sufism: the Haqqaniyya” in *Sufism in the West*, 103.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

- ¹¹ Al-Ḥaqqānī was the grand *mufti* of Cyprus, Westerlund, *Contextualization*, 18.
- ¹² Ron Geaves, “Learning the lessons from the neo-revivalist and Wahhabi movements: the counterattack of the new Sufi movements in the UK” in *Sufism in the West*, 151.
- ¹³ Nielsen *et. al*, *Transnational Sufism*, 105.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, 106.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, 105.
- ¹⁶ Ian Draper, “From Celts to Kaaba: Sufism in Glastonbury” in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, 149.
- ¹⁷ Nielsen *et. al*, *Transnational Sufism*, 106.
- ¹⁸ Draper, *From Celts*, 150.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*.
- ²⁰ Nielsen *et. al*, *Transnational Sufism*, 106. Al-Ḥaqqānī appears to have authorized the use of music as a way of appealing to new adherents.
- ²¹ Mohammed Seddon, *The Last of the Lascars: Yemeni Muslims in Britain, 1836-2012*, (London: Kube Publishing Limited, 2014), 118.
- ²² *Ibid*, 117.
- ²³ Mohammed Seddon, “Shaykh Abdullah Ali al-Hakimi, the ‘Alawi Tariqa and British Yemenis” in *Sufism in Britain*, eds. Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013),74.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, 84.
- ²⁵ Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 343.
- ²⁶ Fred Halliday, *Britain’s First Muslims: portrait of an Arab country*, (London: Tauris, 2010), 33.
- ²⁷ Halliday, *Britain’s First Muslims*,30.
- ²⁸ Seddon, *Last of the Lascars*, 140.
- ²⁹ Damrel, *Aspects*, 122
- ³⁰ Damrel, *Aspects*, 122.
- ³¹ Garbi Schmidt, “Sufi charisma on the Internet” in *Sufism in Europe and North America*.
- ³² Seddon, *Last of the Lascars*, 129.
- ³³ Halliday, *Britain’s First Muslims*, 30.
- ³⁴ Robert Serjeant, “Yemeni Arabs in Britain”, *The Geographical Magazine*, vol. 17:4 (1944), 147; Sydney Collins, *Coloured Minorities in Britain: Studies in British Race Relations Based on African, West Indian, and Asiatic Immigrants*, (London, Lutterworth Press, 1957), 186.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, 32, *italics are mine*.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*.
- ³⁷ Abdullāh al-Ḥakīmī, *Dīnu-llāhī wāhid*, (Cardiff, al-Salam, 1958); idem, *al-As’ilah wal-ajwibah bayna al-masā’ihīyah wal-islām*, (Cardiff, al-Salam, 1955).
- ³⁸ For a general outline of the current doctrines of the order, see Khaled Bentounes, *Soufisme Héritage Commun*, (Mostaganem: 2009).
- ³⁹ Marta Dominguez-Diaz, “The one or the many? Transnational Sufism and locality in the British Budshishiyya” in *Sufism in Britain*.

⁴⁰ Geaves/Gabriel, *Sufism in Britain*, 4-5.

⁴¹ By this, I refer to the conflict between Salafism (representing itself as pure Islam) and Sufism (representing itself as traditional Islam).

⁴² Geaves, "Learning the lessons.." in *Sufism in the West*; idem, "Transformation and trends among British Sufis" in *Sufism in Britain*. See also, Simon Stjernholm, "Sufi politics in Britain: the Sufi Muslim Council and the 'silent majority' of Muslims", in *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, Vol.12: 3 (2010), 215-226.

Till Death do us DEPART: Repatriation, Burial, and the Necropolitical Work of Turkish Funeral Funds in Germany

OSMAN BALKAN

Abstract

This paper analyzes the transnational funerary rituals of the Turkish community in Germany. It focuses on the operations of two funeral funds administered by the longest-standing Turkish associations in Europe, Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği (DITIB) and Islamisch Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş (IGMG). These funds were established to help facilitate and subsidize the provision of Islamic funerals in Germany. Drawing on contracts, membership forms, informational literature, and interviews with fund representatives, I argue that the funeral funds encourage a form of necropatriotism by providing material incentives for the repatriation of their members to Turkey for burial. In highlighting the ways that institutions, economic incentives, and legal constraints help determine burial choices, I suggest that end-of-life decisions are never entirely shaped by sentimental reasons.

Introduction

Where does a dead body belong? For minority communities in migratory settings, the answer is far from obvious. While death is a universally shared human experience, the geographical character of loss is foregrounded in situations where the country of birth and death are not the same. Determining where to bury a family member is tied to larger processes of social positioning, boundary construction, and identity formation. As a place-making project, the act of burial helps shape individual and collective identities by communicating information about the deceased and their community. It signals not only who the deceased was but where they belong.

This paper considers the phenomenon of repatriation for burial, a practice that is common amongst the Turkish diaspora in Germany. It focuses on two funeral funds administered by the largest and most established Turkish Islamic associations in Europe, *Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği* (The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, hereafter DITIB) and *Islamisch Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş* (Islamic Community Milli Görüş, hereafter IGMG). I contend that the funds encourage a form of necropatriotism by

providing material incentives for the repatriation of dead bodies to Turkey. Although they do not explicitly require that their members be repatriated for burial, an overwhelming majority of fund members (upwards of ninety to ninety-five percent) choose to do so. Due to space constraints, this paper does not address the complex constellation of reasons that compel people to partake in this transnational ritual. Instead, it focuses on the institutional dimension of funeral provision amongst the Turkish community in order to highlight the structural parameters that shape and constrain individual actions and end-of-life decisions. In contrast to accounts that read repatriation as a reflection of migrants' low level of integration in their country of residence or as a sign of nostalgia for their homeland, I argue that institutionalized incentive structures and economic calculations play a considerable role in determining where dead migrants will be buried.

In what follows, I first provide a brief overview of previous approaches to the study of death in diasporic settings. While scholars of migration have generated many insights into the causes and consequences of the movement of living persons, they have been less attentive to the possibilities that the voyages of the dead offer toward understanding the relationship between belonging, identity, and place. Moreover, existing works have largely overlooked the institutional dimension of the organization of transnational funerals. I address this omission by outlining the terms of membership and services offered by the funeral funds operated by DITIB and IGMG. Drawing on membership applications, contracts, informational literature, and interviews with fund representatives, I show how economic incentives and legal constraints structure burial practices. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate that end-of-life decisions are never entirely shaped by sentimental reasons.

Death in the Diaspora

“In a society of migrants,” writes Engseng Ho, “what is important is not where you are born, but where you die.”¹ The place of death is consequential because it has the potential to become the site of burial. While the myth of return, a belief in the temporary nature of migration and the concomitant expectation of eventual return to the homeland is a common framing device in tropes of migration, the sort of glorious homecoming envisioned by this myth is not always achieved in practice, at least while the individual is still living.

Repatriation for burial is neither unique nor limited to the Turkish

community in Germany. It is a practice that is common to minority groups in a variety of national settings, including Mexicans in the United States, Sylhetis in Britain, Zimbabweans in South Africa, and Algerians in France.² A more well-known example of this phenomenon concerns the recovery and repatriation of the remains of soldiers killed in action, a task that costs the U.S. government nearly 100 million dollars annually.³ While migrants and soldiers provide two distinct optics for analyzing the cross-border circulation of corpses, both types of posthumous journeys are symbolically charged and undergirded by an intricate bureaucratic apparatus.

Scholars of nationalism have analyzed the political significance of dead bodies by showing how burials and re-burials of elites and non-elites alike confer historical depth to imagined communities.⁴ In migratory settings, transnational funerary rituals highlight the emotional costs of living between two places and how these costs are distributed differently between men and women and between first- and second-generation migrants.⁵ Repatriation for burial has been understood as a spatial practice of community-making that extends beyond national cartographies.⁶ It has also been viewed as a practice that is intimately connected to migrants' uncertain, precarious, or vulnerable lives.⁷ Others have suggested that the strength of ties to their country of origin helps explain why members of certain minority groups are reluctant to bury their dead in their country of residence.⁸ While these studies have shed considerable light on the costs, effects, and motivations behind repatriation, they have largely ignored the ways in which migrant funerals are organized and implemented in practice. As a result, little has been said about how structural constraints affect decisions about the place of burial. In order to better understand the role that institutions play in the provision of transnational funerals, I turn now to the necropolitical work of Turkish funeral funds in Germany.⁹

Dead Bodies on the Move

The first Turkish funeral fund was established by DITIB in 1991. The administration of Islamic funerals is one of many services provided by the organization, whose scope of activities includes religious education and religious services (*eid* celebrations, Friday prayers, Koran courses, *hajj* pilgrimages), socio-cultural activities (musical and theatrical performances, conferences, interfaith dialogues), language courses, and women's and youth groups.¹⁰ Founded in 1984 as an outpost of the Turkish Directorate of

Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), DITIB is an important hub for Islam in Germany because of the institutional hegemony it enjoys vis-à-vis other Turkish and Islamic groups.¹¹ According to its website, its funeral fund was created to “provide a lasting, practical, and secure solution to the serious problem faced by our people who, having spent a lifetime in *gurbet* and out of a longing for their homeland, desire to have their bodies repatriated to our country for burial.”¹² It is the largest of several funeral funds operating in Germany, with approximately 300,000 members in Europe and an annual operating budget of around 15 million Euros.

The second largest funeral fund, with roughly 74,000 members and an annual budget of around 3.5 million Euros, was established in 2002 by IGMG, an organization that has gained a strong foothold as a diasporic network of Turkish Muslims in Europe. In Germany, the organization has brought forth several high profile court cases advocating for greater religious freedom in public life. These include the right to public religious education for German Muslims, the recognition of Islamic practices such as ritual slaughter, the right for Muslim teachers to wear religious attire in schools, and the provision of Islamic services in social and medical institutions.¹³ It came under increased scrutiny and surveillance after the *Bundesverfassungsschutz* (Germany’s domestic intelligence agency) stated in its reports that its activities posed a threat to German democracy.¹⁴ According to its membership literature, the funeral fund was instituted with the “recognition that every mortal being will one day migrate from this world where they are a guest.” Like DITIB, the provision of funerals is one of many services offered by the organization, which also include Koran courses, mosque services, *hajj* pilgrimages, religious education for children, sports activities, language classes, and youth and women’s groups.

There are several notable differences in the membership criteria of the funds, which serve to produce boundaries along different axes like religion and nationality. One of the major differences concerns citizenship. Whereas DITIB’s fund is only open to Turkish citizens or EU citizens with Turkish roots (i.e. individuals who have renounced their Turkish citizenship in order to qualify for an EU passport), IGMG has no citizenship requirement and is open to all nationalities. Another difference is religious affiliation. IGMG only accepts Muslim members (including converts), while DITIB’s fund is open to members of all religious faiths. These differences reflect the political and

religious orientation of the two organizations. DITIB, which has institutional and economic links to the Turkish government, espouses a vision of Islam that is in line with the Turkish state and has a nationalist orientation that privileges Turkish identity. IGMG, on the other hand, is a transnational civil society organization that has no official connection to the Turkish state (though the majority of its members are supporters of Erdoğan and the AKP), and foregrounds a Muslim identity in its efforts to attain greater recognition of Islamic practices in Europe.

Membership fees vary by age for both funds (See Tables 1 and 2), and membership covers the individual, his/her spouse and any unmarried children under the age of 18. IGMG's fund also extends coverage to unmarried daughters and mentally disabled children of any age, and children under the age of 27 who are students. To qualify for coverage these individuals must have no source of income (either through employment or welfare payments). In spite of extended coverage benefits, it should be noted that the funeral funds do not operate like life insurance agencies, the major difference between the two being that the funds will not reimburse any of the principal costs or premiums that members have paid if they decide to cancel their membership or withdraw from the fund before they die.

Table 1: *DITIB membership fees (in Euros).*

Source: *DITIB Cenaze Fonu Şartnamesi 2014 (DITIB Funeral Fund Contract)*

Age	Cost
0-30	0
31-50	60
51-60	75
61-65	150
66-70	300
70	500

Table 2: IGMG Membership fees (in Euros)

Source: IGMG Cenaze Fonu Şartnamesi 2014 (IGMG Funeral Fund contract)

Age	Cost
0-24	0
25-50	50
51-55	75
56-60	120
61-65	240
66-70	360
71-79	600
80	1000

The services offered to members and their families are largely uniform across both funds. Upon death, a funeral company is assigned to attend to the bureaucratic tasks involved in the preparations for burial or repatriation. The family of the deceased is obligated to work with the company appointed by the fund or risks the termination of their contract and non-payment of benefits. In practice, IGMG's fund works hand-in-hand with specific funeral parlors run by members of its organization and DITIB utilizes an in-house funeral company that is incorporated as a private business, ZSU GmbH. As such, there is an element of cronyism that determines where the business will be allocated.

In the preparations leading up to a member's burial, the funeral parlor will obtain a death certificate, terminate the deceased's residency permit, and procure a certificate from the health department that confirms that the corpse has no infectious diseases. If the individual is to be interred in Germany, the company must acquire a burial permit and make an appointment with the municipal cemetery to determine the time and date of the burial.¹⁵ In addition to these bureaucratic operations, the company will also arrange for the ritual washing (*ghusl*) and shrouding (*kafan*) of the corpse. If the family requests it, a funeral prayer (*namaz*) will be held before burial or repatriation.

If the deceased is to be repatriated to Turkey for burial, a *leichenpass* (literally, “a corpse’s passport”) notarized by the Turkish consulate is required.¹⁶ This permit allows the corpse to be shipped across international borders. The body is transported by plane and must be placed in a hermitically sealed coffin. Both funds provide a free round-trip companion ticket for a family member to accompany the deceased and pay for the costs of ground transportation to any destination in Turkey. These benefits are positive incentives for repatriation.

Importantly, if a fund member is to be buried in Germany, the fund will only cover the costs associated with the washing, shrouding, and transportation of the corpse from the site of death to the cemetery. Neither fund pays for any of the burial expenses if the member is to be interred in a German cemetery, which include the acquisition of a cemetery plot, municipal cemetery fees, and the purchase of a coffin and a tombstone.¹⁷ As such, there is a disincentive for German burial. The price of a cemetery plot varies from state to state in Germany, but is typically leased for a period of twenty to forty years. In Berlin, the cost of a twenty-year plot was 865 euros in 2014 with the option to renew for another twenty years for an additional 520 Euros. In other states, particularly in the Western parts of Germany, the price of a twenty-year cemetery plot can reach upwards of 2500 euros. If the owner of the plot does not renew their lease, a new corpse will be laid in the plot and the original tombstone will be removed.

While the information available on the funds’ websites, membership applications and contracts offers no clear justification why the fees associated with German burial are excluded from their benefits package, these restrictions undoubtedly play an important role in family decisions about where to bury a fund member. In effect, both funds provide economic incentives to repatriate dead bodies to Turkey, citing, amongst other things their members’ “longing for the homeland.” Affective connections to the ancestral soil and living in a condition of estranged exile are presented as motivating factors behind the establishment of the funds. Yet by privileging repatriation over local interment, the funds themselves are important actors in the production of nostalgia for the country of origin. They help promote necropatriotism by incentivizing the return of the dead to their natal soil. And for the most part, they are highly effective. Though there are limited statistical records on this issue, the information that I was able to compile shows that of the 3,185 DITIB fund members who died in Germany in 2013, the vast

majority—3062 or 96.13 percent—were repatriated to Turkey for burial.¹⁸ (See Table 3 for a detailed breakdown). A similar pattern was observed by Zirh, who observed that 95 percent of DITIB fund members who died in Germany in the year 2011 were buried in Turkey.¹⁹

Table 3: *Burial statistics of DITIB members, 2013*

Source: *DITIB Cenaze Fonu Website*

Age	Buried in Turkey	Buried in Germany
Male	2033	82
Female	1025	39
Stillborn	4	2
Total	3062	123
Total (%)	96.13%	3.86%

Conclusion

What is at stake in claiming a dead body as one's own? I contend that the dead inject life into political communities, but not by their own accord. They do so with the help of institutions, organizations, and associations, some of which are connected to the state, others which operate somewhat autonomously in the realm of civil society. The funeral funds administered by DITIB and IGMG are both examples of institutions that manage the symbolic power of the dead through the organization of transnational funerals.

While it is difficult to assign a single meaning to the practice of repatriation for burial, part of the symbolic value of this ritual derives from the relationship between death, soil, and the nation-state. States possess the power to kill and at times ask their citizenry to die. Yet the territories that they govern are made meaningful by virtue of the generations of dead that lay within its soil. The dead sacralize the land and endow it with historical depth, political significance, and symbolic meaning.

Burial endows physical space with a sense of sacred placeness. It helps shape individual and group identities by producing feelings of belonging, ownership, and communal solidarity. As this paper has demonstrated however, we should be careful not to read burial decisions as mere reflections

of sentimental attachments to place. By paying attention to the economic and legal constraints imposed by funerary institutions, we can appraise the role that material calculations play in determining where a body will be buried. In doing so, we are better positioned to investigate why certain groups are invested in necropatriotism and to understand the ways in which economic incentives are used to harness the dead in the service of politics.

Notes

¹ Engsens Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1.

² David Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants: How Mexico Manages its Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), Katy Gardner, "Death of a Migrant: Transnational Death Rituals and Gender Amongst British Sylhetis," in *Global Networks* 2 (2002): 191-204, Lorena Nunez and Brittany Wheeler, "Chronicles of Death Out of Place: Management of Migrant Death in Johannesburg," in *African Studies* 71 (2012): 212-233, Yassine Chaïb, *L'Émigré et la Mort: La mort musulmane en France* (La Calade: Edisud, 2000).

³ Michael Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Identify, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), Myron J. Aronoff, "Establishing Authority: The Memorialization of Jabotinsky and the Burial of the Bar-Kochba Bones in Israel Under the Likud," in *The Frailty of Authority*, ed. Myron Aronoff (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1986): 105-130, Susan Gal, "Bartok's Funeral: Representations of Europe in Hungarian Political Rhetoric," in *American Ethnologist* 18.3 (1991): 440-458, Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Post-Socialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁵ Gardner, "Death of a Migrant."

⁶ Besim Can Zirh, "Following the Dead Beyond the 'Nation': A Map for Transnational Funeral Routes from Europe to Turkey," in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35.10 (2012): 1758-1774.

⁷ Nunez and Wheeler, "Chronicles of Death Out of Place."

⁸ Nathal M. Dessing, *Rituals of Birth, Circumcision, Marriage, and Death among Muslims in the Netherlands* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2001).

⁹ My understanding of "necropolitics" differs from that of Achille Mbembe, who views it as a function of sovereign power and the distribution of life and death. In contrast, my usage of the term emphasizes the ways in which the dead are harnessed in the service of political projects. See Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," in *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40.

¹⁰ Gamze Avci, "Religion, Transnationalism and Turks in Europe," in *Turkish Studies*. 6.2 (2005): 201-213.

¹¹ The Directorate of Religious Affairs was established in 1924 shortly after the founding of the Turkish Republic. With the abolishing of the Caliphate and the creation of the *Diyanet*, the nascent

Turkish state embarked upon a campaign of laicization, best understood not as the separation of religion and politics, but rather, as the extension of state control over religion. Inspired by the French model of *laïcité*, the founders of the Republic created institutions to manage and propagate an ‘official Islam.’ In doing so, the *Diyanet* ensured that Islam retained a prominent and state-defined position in public and political life. See Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹² *Gurbet* does not have a direct equivalent in English. It means to live abroad, away from one’s homeland, but has strong connotations of alienation, estrangement and longing. To live in gurbet is an undesirable condition, and Turks living outside of Turkey are sometimes referred to as “gurbetçi” (one who lives in gurbet). *DITIB Cenaze Tanıtım Broşürü*. Available here: <http://www.ditib.de/default1.php?id=6&sid=14&lang=en> Accessed January 16, 2014.

¹³ Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe: From Guestworker to Transnational Citizen* (New York: Berghahn, 2011).

¹⁴ Gökçe Yurdakul and Ahmet Yükleven, “Islam, Conflict, and Integration: Turkish Religious Associations in Germany,” *Turkish Studies* 10.2 (2009): 217-231.

¹⁵ There are approximately 32,000 graveyards in Germany of which 250 have dedicated areas reserved for Islamic burials. For more information about Muslim cemeteries in Germany see “Muslim Funeral Culture and Graveyards in Germany” <www.initiative-kabir.de>. Accessed May 15, 2014.

¹⁶ The first treaty concerning the cross-border transportation of corpses was signed in 1937 as the “International Convention on the Transport of Corpses” and updated in 1973 with the “Agreement on the Transport of Corpses.” The agreement requires that corpses being shipped across international borders be furnished a *laissez-passer* or *leichenpass* (Article 3). For the full text of the Agreement see “Agreement on the Transfer of Corpses”

<<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/080.htm>> Accessed June 10, 2014.

¹⁷ German burial laws vary from state to state. Some states (Nordrhein-Westfalen, Baden-Württemberg, Hessen, Berlin and Hamburg) allow for burial according to Islamic tradition, in which a corpse is wrapped in a cloth shroud and buried without a coffin. In recent years, German Muslims have successfully lobbied for the creation of Islamic cemeteries and the relaxation of burial laws to accommodate different religious traditions. However, most states still require that an individual is buried in a coffin. See Michael Scott Moore, “Homeward Bound: Muslims in Germany Choose to be Buried Abroad” *Der Spiegel*, February 21, 2007.

¹⁸ DITIB periodically posts a list of its members who have passed away in the current calendar year on its website: <<http://www.cenazefonu.de/v1/defaultvefatedenuyeler.php?p=4>> Accessed January 14, 2014. Unfortunately, IGMG does not keep public records about the burial location of its members, but based on my interviews with IGMG fund administrators, around 80-90% of fund members are repatriated to Turkey for burial. What remains to be seen is whether or not individuals who are not members of funeral funds are repatriated for burial in such high numbers.

¹⁹ Zirh, “Following the Dead Beyond the ‘Nation.’ Of the 2,866 funerals of DITIB members in 2011, 2,718 were repatriated to Turkey for burial.

Muslim Responses to Far-right Confrontation: Ethical and Operational Consideration in Method

YAHYA BARRY

Abstract

This paper is part of a broader project looking at the influence dynamics between far-right activism as it surges across Europe and Islamified religion. Here, I explore individual Muslim responses to far-right confrontation. The paper also addresses some of the ethical and operational issues that researchers need to grapple with in designing their research models. The first issue is the power relations between researcher and participant. The second is my approach to studying a complex abstract phenomenon in a reliable way, inclining away from manufacturing data and instead trying to find it, through an operational model which tracks identity reconfigurations in the midst of social change.

The Research Problem

The study investigates how confrontational factors influence Muslim identity. Has far-right activism stimulated identity reconfigurations among Muslims in Europe? Scholarship on confrontations between Islam and native European populations has tended to focus on structural themes.¹ Europe has responded to Islam with an array of strategies; Islam has responded with a number of sensibilities and reconfigurations.² This has excluded significant constituencies of the community and overlooked ‘everyday’ identity negotiations. To address this, I adopted frameworks which contextualize space contestation within the interlocutors’ own experiences of identity negotiation.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Four main perspectives relating to: *social agency*,³ *social identity*,⁴ *social influence*⁵ and *everyday life*⁶ form the theoretical frameworks of the study. Scholarship has tended to adopt the nation state as the standard mode of contextualisation in European-Islam studies.⁷ To avoid tracing a power-structural model, I adopted a *scalar approach*⁸ and selected the *urban* setting as an alternative context. I looked at four European cities, namely: Edinburgh, Copenhagen, London and Malmö.

When academics engage with communities, there is an ethical and pragmatic need to consider power roles. One of the models addressing this is Participatory Action Research (PAR),⁹ seen as a “democratic commitment to break the monopoly on who owns knowledge and for whom social research should be undertaken.”¹⁰ Since the participants have valuable local expertise, research should be synergized through interactive participatory methods to complement the participants’ diverse modes of expression.

I am not assuming *a priori* that there is a confrontational problem with the far-right as far as my participants are concerned. Rather, the aim is to see if it is at all relevant. Reconciling the ethical demands of PAR with my research interest can be achieved by articulating my study in terms of looking at ‘change’ in identity and its causes among European Muslims. By making ‘change’ the primary analytical variable, I can focus on my research interests in far-right confrontation by looking at how my interlocutors refer to it; if indeed they do.

The recent surge in far-right activism is a relatively new social phenomenon situated within the context of social change.¹¹ McLeod & Thomson’s concept of *social change dynamics*¹² outlines the importance of employing models which correspond with the relationships being studied.

There have been paradigm shifts in the modelling of *social change* research. Recently, a *four-dimensional sociology* added the ‘time and change’ factor to the model.¹³ Freud’s “mystic writing pad”¹⁴ is a conceptual representation of the four-dimensional model’s outline. Changes are visually recorded on this pad and can be traced. The magic pad is four-dimensional insofar as it accommodates: the spatial (the pad’s locus in relation to its wider context); the temporal (continuous narrative on each page); and the ‘time and change’ element.

The mystic pad became a useful conceptual tool for tracking change. I have adopted the concept of creating ‘response portfolios’ for my participants.¹⁵ This relates to the general operational mechanism of Freud’s “mystic writing pad” insofar as the objective is to try and trace a specific factor in relation to its changing collateral relationships and contingent co-variables. The portfolio can therefore be a tool which enables these elements to leave their marks in a form which can then be analysed.

Presentation of Two Response Portfolios

I present two portfolios I have created with my participants in Edinburgh. The objective is not to provide a detailed analysis but to give a broad overview of how my PAR model has been a fruitful research tool. I will first show some of the general themes of identity in relation to 'change' before illustrating the ways PAR complemented data collection in line with my project's central issue.

Zaid

My first participant in Edinburgh was Zaid, mid-thirties, from the US/Caribbean. Race relations were a prevalent theme in Zaid's discussion about his identity:

So what sets me apart from some of the Muslims here... is my own experiences: with prejudice, racism, discrimination, hatred from white people or Europeans. And also my racial identity... That's a very strong theme in my life.

I suspected that far-right politics would stimulate sharp responses, however I allowed him to express his sense of change in identity. He chose a visual representation to depict his journey to Edinburgh by drawing a world map (overleaf). He anthropomorphized the United States (top left) in the figure of a bearded man looking through two windows with one eye. The window adjacent to the United States is transparent whereas the one adjacent to the United Kingdom (top right) is opaque. Zaid said: "My experience of being in the US is that if somebody hates you, they hate you, you know, and they are very overt about that." He contrasted this with race relations in the United Kingdom and Europe: "For me I think that racism here is very covert, but... they're not very good at it [laughing]." Despite his identification as American, Zaid outlined his connection to Britain: "And the advantage of having my eye out here is I have a connection to this place which I view as, you know, as kind of the origin of all the racism that my forefathers faced here."

Zaid explained his configuration of identity towards the 'covert' British racism, and how he perceives it. In this lay his response to the surge of far-right activism.

And then there's the obviousness of the organizations that are very overt or becoming very overt such as, you know, the BNP, the EDL and what not. But the advantage of this is, and I always feel that I have the advantage, that it's very, very plain and open to me... I've experienced

all of this. We know all about this. We know how you people are. You're not going to pull the wool over my eyes. I'm cut from a different cloth... And maybe when I say they are not so skilful maybe what I'm expressing is my high degree of skill in detecting and my feeling glad with myself that I've been able to detect this among people who have such a high degree of skill.



For Zaid, Islam represented a “source of empowerment” which together with his experiences enabled him to see the far-right in quite calm, composed and rational terms. He was even willing to see things from their point of view. When I asked, “Am I right in assuming that you take a very hard-line against any far-right ideology, I mean race is so central to you, it's your window to the world?” he responded:

I think the most genuine response for me to give would be yes. And then a more nuanced response would be... I like to think of myself always as sort of a person who likes to engage with difference and with diversity, even if it's

threatening to me. Not threatening to me physically but ideologically as well as in terms of identity... I do like to be in environments that are, I guess, somewhat ideologically hostile.

Edinburgh's local context was instrumental in this negotiation of identity because of his relatively positive experience in the city which for the most part was free from far-right activism and confrontation: “I think it's a blessed city. There's something special about the city. I don't know what it is, but it's a very special place.”

Fiona

The second participant is Fiona, mid-forties, from Scotland. Race wasn't a prevalent feature in her identity discourse. For her family, femininity and relationships were the dominant themes in her PAR portfolio.

Scottish Muslim Women's Association... did a project called “I speak for myself” about the hijab... and what we had to do was we had to write a statement about you know [being] Scottish Muslim... But for me, I was like: I've always identified as being Scottish, and I don't know how somebody who is Asian being brought up here, [how] they identify as being

she raised quite personal issues. She remarked that the research model I employed was “therapeutic” and reminded her of the brief period she spent at a mental health home. When I saw that far-right confrontation was not a central element in her identity discourse, I decided to stimulate some responses. I asked: “How do you reconcile between your identity as Muslim and your identity as Scottish? Do you see conflict between the two?”

I don't see that there's a conflict, in me. I, first and foremost am a Muslim, always. Because whatever land I am born onto, it's the land of Allah, before it's the land of the Scots or the English.... Even though I do identify as being Scottish [it's] because that's a learnt behaviour of [being] Scottish, English....

When asked how such divisional politics made her feel, the response was that it made her angry. Her response was interesting because it was configured in terms of the dominant themes in her identity – family and relationships.

These different groups and sects are man-made constructions of identity of Scottishness... They're trying to give people a false sense of what nationality is... It's about neighbourhood. It's about family, your flock ... and the people around you. And what is it if they come from whatever country?

When I asked about her experience of direct confrontation far-right activist elements, she replied in a composed and confident manner similar to Zaid, showing that her Muslim identity was secure enough to engage in dialogue with elements of the far-right.

They came here to Central Mosque... the EDL, or the SDL, outside protesting. And I went to have a look, but we were all ushered back in... There's part of me that wants to go and... challenge them, not in a confrontational way, but listen to what the real... people on the street – those that are in the SDL. What is your real issue here then? No[t] what the media is making it out to be... And there are people I know on a personal level... that outwardly say I'm part of that... Like my sister's boyfriend... They would have never have had an opportunity to meet another Muslim... So I thought here's an ideal opportunity... So the difficulty is, in those small groups, there's a lot of testosterone, a lot of alcohol, violence... So you really have to choose your words wisely... I couldn't go to the bars. But there's part of me that's driven to say: yea ... What gives me the right to say they're not entitled to *da`wah*? But... my Islam comes first.

Discussion

Although I have presented just two examples from the fieldwork I conducted in Edinburgh, they adequately demonstrate PAR's potential for generating quality data. In tandem with my operational approach, it has opened up possibilities for data collection and analysis in ways which the more

conventional approaches might not have permitted. Zaid's comments reflected something of this:

I guess I feel like a sort of negotiation for space that you've allowed me, and that's been wonderful. I feel that I can talk about anything, and share anything. It may or may not be relevant. There is no pressure to make it relevant to anything.

What is interesting is how both participants expressed changes in their identity through their respective journeys in life, and how they used 'maps' to chart their trajectories. In Fiona's case, this was deeply personal and therefore therapeutic: "And there is a part of me that says, maybe I should just, there must be a forum [where], I am able to project these ideas in a safe and halal environment where I'm not being stripped to the bone..." Although far-right confrontation was not an immediately apparent issue in her identity negotiation, it was still relevant and "part of the bigger picture". Islam provided her with the tools to reconfigure what it means to be "human" and "a national", and in this she showed confidence in her willingness to engage elements of the far-right in dialogue, because they are after all part of the nation which she defined as: family, flock and neighbourhood.

Zaid's identity discourse exhibited an inherent attachment to racial identity through his experiences of being part of the "Black community" in the United States. He also expressed emotion in his PAR sketch: "I thought maybe it would be very superficial. But actually, I've managed to put something on paper that I feel very deeply connected to. There's a lot of emotion behind what I've drawn here." Islam's empowerment enabled him to, in a way, transcend seeing the far-right in simply antagonistic terms, and place himself in the position of an 'expert', uncovering their c/overt agenda and feeling at ease, even proud. Again, there was a willingness to engage in dialogue with this confrontation.

It is difficult to make generalisations about Edinburgh. However, it is apparent in Zaid's case that the city is characterized by a near-absence of far-right confrontation – at least in his personal experience.

I kind of pat myself on the back that I happened upon Scotland instead of England [laughing]... And I'm always for the underdog... I feel actually quite privileged to be here at this point where Scotland is discussing independence... It just makes me feel like I'm in the right place... But Edinburgh, yea, the people are wonderful. The Muslims and the non-Muslims: I really like the people here. On the subject of the far-right, I don't see it as being very strong here... Whenever I think about it, I always think of it as down there, as in, down there

across the border... yea, down south. It doesn't seem to be something that predominates the experience up here.

To a certain extent, the ethical and pragmatic dilemmas with regard to addressing power relations and validity/reliability issues in academic research are perpetual. The objective has not been to resolve them absolutely, but rather to demonstrate an awareness of the problem and design reliable frameworks to mitigate the greatest shortcomings. The following from Zaid shows something of the problem's perpetual nature.

I think that, autonomously, I do have somewhat of an attachment to your research interest. So that's my sort of subjective positioning regards what it is your research is. So as for, you know, saying things that are relevant or do relate to your research, I do feel that it is packaged in a way, although not consciously. I didn't prepare it in that way. But it would seem to organically or out of the spur of the moment come out, because I am aware of it at the back of my mind. However, as closely as is genuine, and with that, I just have to reiterate that you've left me with the freedom to do that or not do that. So I'm not doing that under any pressure. You know as I talk, I have that at the back of my mind. I'm thinking how relevant what I'm saying is to your research. But at the same time, I do feel that naturally.

As a result of this, one of the ethical/pragmatic issues I am still contending with is whether to disclose to my participants my actual research interest in far-right confrontation within the larger context of identity change.¹⁶ Regardless of the final decision I take on the issue, PAR remains the project's central research model for the pure reason that it has raised such awareness.

Notes

¹ Ruth Mandel, "A Place of Their Own: Contesting Spaces and Defining Places in Berlin's Migrant Community," and John Eade, "Nationalism, Community, and the Islamization of Space in London," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996).

² Stefano Allievi, "Conflicts, Cultures and Religions: Islam in Europe as a sign and symbol of change in European Society," in *Islam and the New Europe: Continuities, Changes, Confrontations* volume 6, eds. Sigrid Nökel & Levent Tezcan (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2005); Stefano Allievi and Jorgen S. Nielsen, *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003); Nadia Jeldtoft, *Everyday Lived Islam: Religious reconfigurations and secular sensibilities among Muslim minorities in the West* (PhD dissertation, Theology Faculty, Copenhagen University, 2012); Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2006); Jorgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

- ³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Calif.: California University Press, 1984).
- ⁴ Thomas Risse, "A European Identity? Europeanization and the Evolution of Nation-State Identities," in *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, eds. Maria G. Cowles et al. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).
- ⁵ Herbert C. Kelman, "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 2, No. 1, *Studies on Attitudes and Communication* (March 1958), 51-60; Edward E. Sampson, *Social Worlds Personal Lives: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, Chicago, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1991).
- ⁶ Ammerman 2007; Berger 2007; Hall 1997, cf. Nadia Jeldtoft, *Everyday Lived Islam*, 69.
- ⁷ Nadia Jeldtoft, *Everyday Lived Islam*.
- ⁸ Çağlar 2009, cf. Nadia Jeldtoft, *Everyday Lived Islam*.
- ⁹ Mats Alvesson & Kaj Sköldböck, *Reflexive Methodology. New vistas for Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009); Sarah L. Kindon, Rachel Pain & Mike Kesby, *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place*, (Routledge, 2007).
- ¹⁰ Sarah L. Kindon, Rachel Pain & Mike Kesby, *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods*, 11.
- ¹¹ Yahya Barry, *Islam and the Far-right: Influences Stimulating Community Imaginations. A Case Study of the English Defence League*, (MA dissertation, Theology Faculty, Copenhagen University, 2013).
- ¹² Julie McLeod & Rachel Thomson, *Researching Social Change: Qualitative Approaches*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009).
- ¹³ Ibid., 7-9.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 9.
- ¹⁵ To clarify this further, my engagement with each participant involves creating a portfolio with them in which the data collected during the period of engagement can be stored in to enable myself and them to review its contents.
- ¹⁶ My supervisors and external examiner all made the suggestion that I do not disclose my actual research interest during the presentation of my work in the First Year Review. I responded citing ethical concerns.

Exploring the Clinical Experiences of Muslim Psychologists in the UK: Religion in Therapy

SARA BETTERIDGE

Abstract

This paper gives a brief overview of the research project conducted in partial fulfillment of a professional doctorate in counseling psychology. It focuses on Muslim psychologists and how they experience therapy when clients discuss religion. The importance of the study of religion and therapy is considered, reviewing the advantages and difficulties of including a client's religious belief in therapy. Training for psychologists on religion in therapy is identified as a clear need in order to help psychologists feel comfortable about discussing clients' religious beliefs and integrating it successfully into therapy. In a bid to increase knowledge in this field Muslim psychologists were asked about how they feel when religion is discussed, how their personal faith may impact therapy, and whether religion has an impact on what therapeutic model they use. Six Muslim psychologists trained and working in the UK were interviewed on their experiences of working with Muslim clients and clients from different faiths. Analysis of the data showed an overall theme of 'congruence', which permeated the five high order categories of 'religious journeys in therapy', 'therapeutic approaches', 'therapeutic relationship', 'therapists identity', and 'context of therapy'. To have a high level of congruence in these areas suggested a more successful integration of religious beliefs in therapy, both for the client and the therapist. The Muslim psychologists born and raised in the UK appeared more comfortable than Christian and non-religious peers, with incorporating religion into therapy. The two participants not born and raised in the UK had contrasting results and struggled both with their own faith and with integrating religion into their practice.

Introduction

The cure of the part should not be attempted without treatment of the whole. No attempts should be made to cure the body without the soul. Let no one persuade you to cure the head until he has first given you his soul to be cured, for this is the great error of our day, that physicians first separate the soul from the body.¹

It may seem obvious that in therapy a person should be viewed and treated holistically, however this is not the case in mainstream healthcare. As medicine specializes in dealing with the body, psychology professes to deal with the mind, and sadly both have disconnected themselves from the soul, which of course has traditionally been dealt with by religion. Although psychologists in training receive lectures on gender, age, sexual orientation, spirituality (in

its broadest sense) race, and culture, training on religion and how to incorporate a person's beliefs in therapy is almost non-existent.²

Working within time-limited and often highly structured services and treatment plans means that incorporating a client's beliefs into therapy raises many questions:

- In a time-limited structured treatment plan, do you need to deviate from the plan, and if so to what extent can this be done?
- If a client's religious views were in conflict with the therapist's could that subconsciously have an impact on the therapy or therapeutic relationship?
- Would introducing a different perspective on the client's religious views be acceptable?
- How appropriate would it be to challenge unhelpful religious beliefs? Are there particular therapeutic models that more easily incorporate a dialogue on religion than other models?

Literature and the Importance of the Study

Most studies on the topic of religion in therapy emanate from North America and focus on the client's perspective within the Christian faith.^{3,4} There has been a growing interest in the UK in this topic over the past ten years (again mainly from the Christian perspective) and to date, studies suggest that overall it is more beneficial to incorporate a client's belief system than to omit it.^{5,6,7} It appears that the majority of clients (for whom religion is important) do want to discuss their faith in therapy⁸ but that unless the therapist creates an environment in which the client feels comfortable to do so (i.e. the therapist mentions that it would be acceptable to discuss religion) clients are unlikely to do so voluntarily.⁹

Aside from lack of training, there are a number of other reasons why therapists find it difficult to discuss religion in therapy and some of those are described below:¹⁰

- 1) Psychology and religion use different languages to describe human suffering (e.g. behavior is sinful versus diagnosis of behavior as an illness)
- 2) Both domains undervalue each other or consider their own domain to be more relevant

- 3) 'Ultimate truths' held in religions tend to alienate psychology
- 4) There are not many individuals in both areas who are interested in integration; and
- 5) Those who are interested in integration may not know enough about both domains

Although over the past few decades there has since been considerably more written about integration of the two domains, some of the above points appear to remain valid, and help to explain why therapists may feel uncomfortable to discuss religion in therapy.

It is generally agreed that this topic should continue to be investigated, particularly evidence-based research, across faiths, in order to inform appropriate training on how to work successfully with these issues.^{11, 12, 13} It is also clearly stated in the Professional Practice Guidelines of the Division of Counseling Psychology (DoCP), Section 3; Practitioners' responsibilities and obligations to self and society that:

Practitioners must consider...all contexts that might affect a client's experience and incorporate it into the assessment process, formulation and planned intervention...make themselves knowledgeable about the diverse life experiences of the clients they work with... [and] challenge the views of people who pathologize on the basis of such aspects as sexual orientation, disability, class origin or racial identity and religious and spiritual views.¹⁴

Conducting the Research

This study specifically focuses on Islam, due to: a) recommendations in current relevant research to explore other faiths, b) the personal interest of the researcher, and c) existing research on Islam in therapy remaining highly theoretical.^{15, 16, 17, 18} The aim was to discover what other Muslim psychologists were experiencing in practice and whether the issues mentioned above were occurring; and if so, how they were managing those issues in therapy. The two research questions were 1) How do Muslim psychologists trained in the UK experience religion in a therapeutic setting and what does it mean to them? 2) How do the religious beliefs of Muslim psychologists in the UK impact upon their therapeutic approach with religious clients?

Six psychologists (see Table 1) from across the country who identified themselves as Muslim were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. All participants were trained and working in the UK, both in NHS

and private settings. Two of the six participants were not born in the UK. Their religious beliefs, which were collected qualitatively as part of the interview, ranged from 1) being a practicing Muslim with a high level of Islamic knowledge, 2) to having sound knowledge of the faith with varying degrees of practice and, 3) not practicing mainstream Islam, but having some personal knowledge of it. The last description was considered to add to category saturation by providing data from a 'negative case' of a 'non-practicing Muslim'; incorporating it into the analysis provided richer data. Interviews lasted approximately ninety minutes and audio recordings were transcribed and then analyzed using the method of Grounded Theory outlined by David Rennie.^{19,20,21} Participants were first asked to discuss cases of clients from a different faith where religion had been a significant part of therapy, describing both positive and negative experiences. They were then asked to discuss Muslim client cases, both positive and negative experiences, in which religion was a significant aspect of therapy. To increase reliability and validity of the data a reflective journal was kept by the researcher on the process, content, intrapersonal experience, and early ideas on the interviews.

Results

In response to the first research question, the Muslim psychologists interviewed for this study have a rich and diverse experience of religion in a therapeutic setting. They were able to discuss ways in which they were actively thinking about their faith, the faith of their client, and its implications for therapy. For these participants it was clear that if a client raised religious issues in therapy they could: 1) understand, validate and encourage its importance in therapy, 2) be comfortable about dealing with religious issues in therapy, 3) incorporate religious strategies/solutions into therapy, 4) assess, acknowledge and discuss client-therapist 'differences' in therapy, and 5) feel a connection to God through being a therapist, that this connection is increased when helping clients with their own connection to God, and could be further increased if the client shared the same faith. In comparison to similar studies conducted with non-religious and Christian psychologists in a secular setting, Muslim psychologists appear to be more comfortable with discussing and incorporating religion in therapy. Overall therapists felt that their religious identities were influential in how they experienced therapy, and would disclose their faith if they felt it would be beneficial to the therapeutic encounter. In response to the second research question, the majority of participants felt that their choice of therapeutic modality fit with a

religious/Islamic framework, despite all were practicing different models. It appears that they adapted their chosen therapeutic approach to accommodate their own and their clients' religious beliefs, but sometimes had difficulties with constrictions of time and organizational expectations. These results were severely impacted by the two therapists not born and raised in the UK, and differed mainly due to a perceived process of acculturation when moving to the UK and the level of their religious practice (or lack thereof). The grounded theory produced consisted of one core theme, five high order themes and nineteen low order themes (see figure 1).

The core theme of 'Congruence' was found to flow through the data and link the categories (see figure 1), it denotes that the more congruent a therapist is to a) their own faith, b) their client's faith and c) their chosen therapeutic method, the more successful the therapeutic encounter is likely to be. The less congruent a therapist or client is in the aspects mentioned above, the more likely they are to have difficulty with incorporating religious beliefs in therapy. The participants felt that congruence in the therapeutic experience was of even greater importance than usual when religious belief formed part of therapy. Five main categories emerged from the data:

- 1) *religious journeys in therapy*; this category emphasizes the need to be mindful and respectful of client's religious journey in life and how this may impact therapy
- 2) *therapeutic approaches*: participants used a variety of approaches but were mindful of religious interpretations and chose religiously congruent techniques from the different modalities. Participants were happy to incorporate religious interventions and coping strategies such as prayer
- 3) *therapeutic relationship*: there appeared to be advantages and disadvantages of having the same faith therapist and that overall sharing a belief in God was sufficient to have a congruent experience. However, if the experience with a same faith client was congruent and positive it led to a spiritually increased therapeutic encounter termed 'the added dance'
- 4) *therapists identity*: participants felt that their identity was important and needed to be considered; it could be disclosed and used positively in therapy when appropriate; but, also, it set boundaries and help therapists to know if and when to refer on or seek external help

- 5) *context of therapy*; all participants noted outside factors which could have an influence on religious issues in therapy such as; culture, language, political climate and the setting of therapy (NHS versus private). Discussion:

The results of this study suggest that Muslim psychologists embark upon a post-qualification journey to find a therapeutic method that best suits them and their beliefs, and adapt it to incorporate religion when necessary. Overall there was not a marked difference between the ways they worked with clients from any faith background including their own; but rather they enjoyed the 'spiritual' connection and the shared understanding of God. This appears to be in line with the literature on client-therapist matching.²² The results on Muslim psychologists in comparison to psychologists from other faiths (mainly Christianity) are much smaller than anticipated and appear to fit well with research conducted on the connections between values and practices of religiously committed Christian psychologists in the UK.²³ This would suggest that in terms of personal faith, and incorporating a client's faith in therapy, Christian and Muslim psychologists in the UK share similar processes. However, this study's participants did appear to feel a little more comfortable with their religious identity and with discussing religion in therapy than their Christian counterparts. The researcher was surprised to discover that participants were not actively using Islamic models of the self (Islamic teachings on the mind, body, heart and soul) when working with Muslim clients. Research suggests that practitioners are likely to pathologize religions they are less familiar with²⁴ and it is also hoped that these findings will allow non-Muslim practitioners to be less concerned about working with religious Muslim clients.

Limitations

The sample size of the study is small and including Muslim counselors and psychotherapists into research in this area would create richer data. There were a number of Muslim psychologists who declined to participate in this study; some stated that they could not participate because they did not integrate their faith into their work. This may be an indicator that participants who agreed to take part in this study represent a population of Muslim psychologists who are generally more comfortable with discussing religion but that others in this population may actually struggle with this concept.

Considerations for Future Research

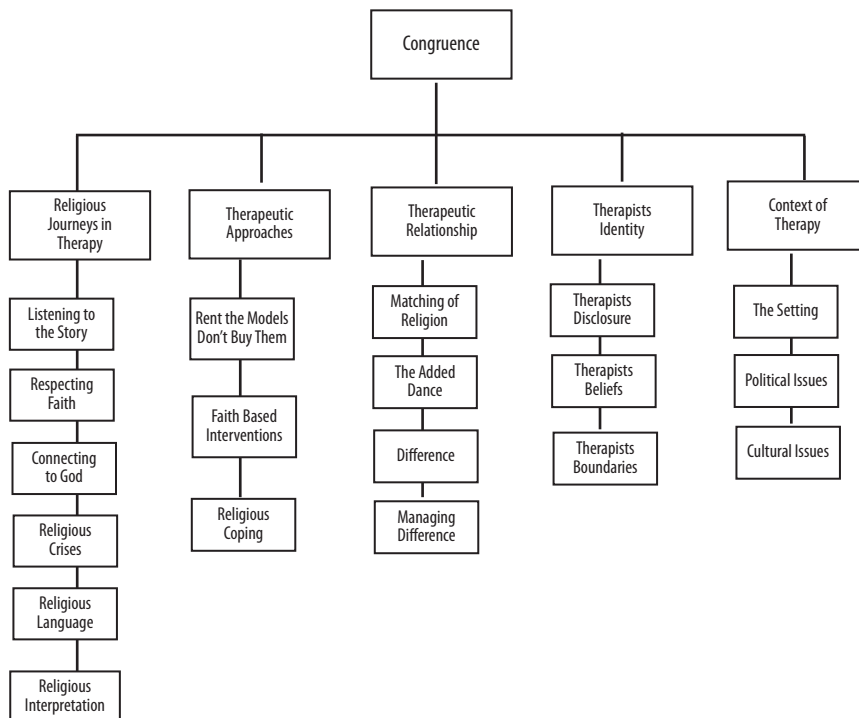
Further research into the level of religiosity of the participant and its impact in therapy is necessary, as those who identified themselves as ‘not practicing’ in this study had markedly different results to the other participants. Both quantitative and qualitative research delving deeper into Islamic psychology, incorporating Islam into western psychotherapies, and understanding the views of Muslim therapists who work in Islamic institutions would be beneficial.

There is so little research in the UK on Muslims in therapy that quantitative studies on outcomes and interventions, more qualitative studies in other areas such as Muslim clients working with therapists of a different faith, and mixed methods studies looking at specificity and efficacy are all worthwhile options for further research.

Table 1: *Participants Demographics*

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country of Cultural Origin	Therapy Practice Setting	Years of Post Qualification Experience
Rehana	Female	32	Pakistan	NHS	3
Salma	Female	33	Kashmir	NHS	5
Sherizad	Female	36	Turkey	NHS/Private	6
Hassan	Male	36	Palestine	NHS	10
Quraat	Female	52	Pakistan	NHS/Private	14
Raffick	Male	60	England	NHS/Private	35

Figure 1: A model of how Muslim psychologists experience religion in therapy:



Notes

¹ B. Jowett, *The Dialogue of Plato*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 1; http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php&andtitle=111&andsearch=%22the+cure+%22&andlayout=html#a_872570 (Accessed 24 April 2011).

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Music in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): How the EYFS can Impact Islamic–faith Early Years Settings

MARYAM BHAM

Abstract

In the UK, all practitioners registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register and working with children under the age of five are required to follow the standards set in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Whilst the EYFS provides flexibility for early years settings to implement the standards at their discretion, the musical aspects of the EYFS have caused problems for Islamic-faith Early Years settings. This is due to differing interpretations of Qur’anic verses and hadiths regarding music in Islam which have impacted the implementation of music in educational settings, as music is deemed to be unlawful by some Muslims. In describing the miscellany of curiosities, motivations and interests that led to researching this area of study, this paper focuses on a case study of an Islamic-faith Early Years setting. In doing so, it reflects on the broader implications of the statutory expressive arts and design area of the EYFS. Using this case study to provide further understanding, the paper looks at how music can be implemented within Islamic-faith Early Years establishments by using ‘Islamic’ concepts of music. The rationale given by the Early Years practitioners in this particular setting suggests that a greater understanding is necessary between Islamic-faith Early Years providers and Ofsted, as the EYFS stresses the importance of music but also of children’s values, customs and cultures. The paper therefore concludes by arguing that governmental educational bodies should consult with Islamic-faith Early Years providers. By doing this, organisations would be able to provide input on how statutory educational frameworks might impact them, and discrepancies between them and other governmental educational bodies would be minimized.

Introduction

Babies are said to be born with innate musical intelligence and music, with rhythm and rhyme being considered essential elements for children to build relationships with others and for developing good communication skills.¹ Considering that music is an important aspect of a child’s development, it is therefore hardly a surprise that it is given great importance in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.

Early educational settings range from nursery classes, to pre-schools, to private and voluntary settings, and are diverse educational settings in England.

Within this diverse array, all registered settings with children from birth to five years old are required to follow the benchmarks laid out in the EYFS framework. This leads to variations in how the framework is interpreted and implemented. Concern has been expressed by various early childhood organisations, as the way in which Early Years practitioners organize provision can potentially impact children's early years development and their experiences of care.²

The field of education tends to be populated by researchers from distinct and diverse orthodoxies but, whilst some areas of study look at ethical dilemmas educational settings face when dealing with Muslim children, the issue of music for Islamic-faith Early Years settings is not only an ethical dilemma but also a religious and moral issue. The legitimacy of music in Islam is an ongoing debate within the wider Muslim community and is a sensitive issue for many Muslims. This may require educators and educational monitoring bodies to revisit the concept of music and reconsider how it can be implemented so that we are able to adhere to definitions of music that are deemed more acceptable within Islam.

Background

Implementation of the revisions made to the EYFS framework by the coalition government was mandatory in Early Years settings from 1 September 2012.³ One of the revisions to the framework was in the expressive arts and design area, which includes providing opportunities and encouragement for children to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities including music, movement and dance.⁴ This area of the EYFS is committed to promoting children's creativity and critical thinking skills. Whilst the EYFS was being scrutinized by educational researchers for many reasons during this time, this research was different in that it did not relate exclusively to education but equally related to religious beliefs.

This particular area of the EYFS was met with great apprehension in the Early Years setting in which I was working. The manager of the setting was aware that Ofsted results could falter if music was not planned within the setting, but the issue she faced was that music was not permissible within the Muslim denomination of those running the setting and of the parents who sent their children there. The manager, parents and an Ofsted investigator were

interviewed in order to understand their opinions in relation to the challenge the setting faced.

The Nature of the Problem

Whilst the denomination of Muslims connected with this particular organisation who hold the belief that music is not permissible may be a minority of Muslims overall, the issue of music within the wider Muslim community is not unheard of nor is it a problem that has not been discussed before in the public domain. In fact, even as early as 1986, the City of Birmingham Education Department showed awareness of the issue by offering the following advice:

Certain types of music may be offensive to some Muslim parents. In such instances great care and sensitivity should be exercised before pupils are asked to participate in such musical forms.⁵

Considering it is also rare to find Muslims who choose to study music to examination level or take part in extra-curricular music activities,⁶ it is perhaps quite surprising that the government has deemed music as a mandatory area to be planned for in the EYFS without consulting those who may be greatly impacted by it.

This was clearly expressed by the manager of the setting. She explained that although not all Muslims may be concerned about music and musical activities, their establishment was different as the parents who sent their children to that particular setting expected the nursery to abide by certain religious beliefs. If these religious beliefs were not adhered to, then there would not be any difference between their setting and other organisations. This argument was not only stressed by the manager but also reinforced by the parents who were interviewed. One parent explained that, “We don’t really listen to music at home but even if we did, I wouldn’t want [my child] coming to this nursery and him doing musical activities... because it is an Islamic nursery after all.” Another parent suggested: “...even if it is a government regulation, they [the setting] will try their best not to go against the teachings of Islam.” The views expressed by the parents showed that they relied on and trusted the setting to help with the Islamic upbringing of their children.

Music in Islam

Colwyn Trevarthen, a great believer in the value and importance of music and communicative musicality in a child's early life, says that music helps build strong bonds between parents, carers and children.⁷ According to Trevarthen,⁸ "music can enhance the focused state of reverence and respect for persons of any age, and the sense of belonging in an affectionate community." The work of Trevarthen helps us understand why music and communicative musicality is deemed to be an important element in a child's early life and why it may be seen as an important area to include in the EYFS. However, the Western concept of what constitutes musical creativity is "increasingly dominant when we seek out what are the values and norms of approval".⁹ The broadening concept of multiple musical creativities therefore tends to be outmoded and we standardize its assessment in accordance with the socially dominant narrative of notions of music, rather than looking at individual dimensions of what others may regard as music.¹⁰

It is understandable that the debate about the permissibility of music within the Muslim community may be difficult for non-Muslims to comprehend. This is not only because music does not have negative connotations for Westerners, but also because some Muslims do not object to music and there are rich traditions of music across the Muslim world.¹¹ This may tempt people to conclude that music is permissible for Muslims of all denominations, even though some Muslims may argue that the legitimization of music is cultural and not in accordance with the laws of Islam.

The contested view of music in Islam derives from many different interpretations of Qur'anic verses and hadiths; but all types of musical creativity are not equally covered in the debate.¹² This is due to the fact that "there is no homogeneous Islamic music culture"¹³ and also because a precise equivalent for the English word 'music' is not found in the Arabic language.¹⁴ Cross, however, states that the absence of a term similar to 'music' from a culture's lexicon does not indicate that that culture does not engage in musical activities.¹⁵ This can be understood by looking at musical elements of Islamic culture. Even though the recitation of the Qur'an (*tarteel*),¹⁶ the call to prayer (*adhān*)¹⁷ and pilgrimage chants (*al-talbiyya*) may not be treated as musical genres in Islamic theology,¹⁸ others who recognize the rhythm, intonation and pitch within these genres may regard them as music.

For comparison, whilst the current EYFS suggests that music is universal and every community has musical traditions, there are religions besides Islam, such as some denominations of Judaism and the Free Church of Scotland, who also have differing concepts of music and forbid the use of musical instruments.

Implications of the Setting

The setting regularly consulted with a religious leader who worked in the education sector and was aware of the EYFS framework requirements and Ofsted regulations. They also had a good parent partnership where parent consultation meetings were held when any problems arose. This helped them work towards a solution whereby activities were implemented within the confines of Islamic law, parents' decisions were being respected and EYFS requirements were also being followed.

The setting revisited the concept of music, defining music as an extension of voice and nature. Activities were then implemented in which children could participate without the use of musical instruments. Some of the activities implemented by the setting consisted of: playing *nasheeds* (religious songs without the use of musical instruments); creating and developing their own *nasheeds*; singing nursery rhymes; using sounds from nature; making rice shakers; and beat boxing. By engaging in these activities of symbolic creativities,¹⁹ new religious musical modalities were being invented.

Ofsted

Whilst the setting thought the problem of implementing music had been solved by implementing these activities, when I interviewed an Ofsted investigator, he commented that he was not able to accept that by implementing these activities all of the expressive arts and design requirements were fulfilled. He said that encouraging children to use different materials, media and musical instruments was just as important and by implementing minimal musical activities the setting would be disregarding these options. The investigator was a Muslim himself, but when I asked if he understood the predicament the setting was facing, he expressed the view that music is permissible in Islam, especially for educational purposes.

Considering such debates tend to involve deeply-held convictions within

Muslim communities, this not only brings us to question whether such faith settings are at a disadvantage in having inspectors of the same faith, but also brings to the fore the need for educational monitoring bodies, such as Ofsted, to have a better understanding of the faith settings they are dealing with. If Ofsted were to impose certain criteria of what constitutes music and dismiss the beliefs of certain denominations of Muslims, it would indicate that Ofsted work with a tightly controlled framework which does not allow for interpreting the framework as freely as the EYFS suggests. If issues like these arise, Ofsted would benefit from consulting with established Muslim institutions and with experienced scholars who are revered by their congregations.

The EYFS: Does it Contradict Itself?

The EYFS makes seventeen references to music in the expressive arts and design area but also mentions that children should have a “strong sense of community”, that children should know the “differences and similarities between them and others” and that they “should know about their own culture and beliefs”.²⁰ The references to the importance of music and the importance of children knowing their culture and beliefs are given equal weight. The setting argued that if Ofsted were to mark the setting down due to them not planning musical activities due to their religious beliefs this would be self-contradictory, as it would mean disregarding the requirement to value and learn about the children’s own culture. In accordance with the terms set by the EYFS, because music is strictly forbidden in Islam it would be crucial for children attending Islamic-faith settings to learn about this difference between their faith and the faith of others. Considering the EYFS also stresses the importance of parent partnership, the move to include music against the wishes of parents would therefore also be counter-productive.

Conclusion

The aversion to music may not be widespread amongst Muslims, and it is perhaps therefore understandable that the government may not be able to make an informed and professional decision about the inclusion of music in statutory frameworks. However, even if a minority of Muslims believe that their religion requires them to avoid certain kinds of music, does the government not then have a responsibility to respect these sensitivities to the extent that is feasibly possible?

Whilst the EYFS dictates that everyone should engage with music, perceive music as music and understand it as such, educational regulators need to be more sensitive about the diversity of views about music and recognize that Western views are not shared universally.²¹ Conceptions of “differing systems of creating music, the sensational experience of creating music, [and] the diversity of practices (and performative acts)”²² therefore require rethinking, as a single definition of what constitutes music may be inappropriate. Not only are the diverse forms of musical creativities manifested differently in different musical traditions but, in addition to this, we need to recognize that music is “a human construction, a product of culture, and accordingly varies from time to time and from place to place”.²³ Thus, we begin to situate creativity within different musical modalities when we tolerate multiple forms of music and when we ask ourselves what music really means to us. This also allows us to diverge from the normal dominant rhetoric about music, and fluid musical roles which music should allow, are made possible.

Educational settings are notorious locations for the entanglement of values, meanings and experiences. Whereas music may be seen “unequivocally as a good thing”, which does not “seriously affect the essence of life” by some, learning communities are dynamic and it must be understood that other cultures and religions, such as Islam, may instead see music as a “form of mediation between humans and the supernatural”.²⁴ Additionally, entertainment, art and creativity have been part of the rich fabric of Islamic culture for centuries, and whilst the use of musical instruments may be prohibited in particular denominations of Islam this does not preclude Muslim children from engaging in other artistic pursuits.

Finally, consulting partners is considered an important aspect of curriculum development and Muslim settings should not be deprived of this consultation. By working collaboratively with settings, the government would be able to explain why they think music has an educational and developmental value, and those who are apprehensive about the implementation of music would be able to explain their predicament.

Britain is a country notably tolerant of other people’s beliefs and it would be against this spirit if communities around EYFS settings were coerced into something with which they were not comfortable. The notion of plurality should allow for the practice of multiple musical creativities. Consultations

prior to setting educational frameworks would help the government implement educational frameworks which would respect other religious beliefs, as well as helping educational monitoring bodies to ultimately create frameworks that are more beneficial and, ideally, readily accepted by all.

Notes

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Counting the Converts: Using Data from Scotland's Census 2001 to Provide a Quantitative Description of Conversion away from Islam

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Abstract

Conversion to Islam is a subject that has attracted a great deal of attention in the media, but has produced very little in the way of reliable quantitative analysis. There is also growing interest in conversion away from Islam, but there appears to be no quantitative analysis of this phenomenon at all. This paper identifies a possible source of data for a quantitative analysis of these two phenomena in Scotland and then generates an estimate for numbers of converts to and from Islam in England and Wales.

Introduction

The phenomenon of conversion to Islam in the United Kingdom is a subject which, while generating a great deal of interest in the media, has led to surprisingly little in the way of published academic research.¹ Further, almost all the research that has been done is qualitative in nature with the majority of published material concentrating on the conversion process and identity issues for converts.²

Material on the phenomenon of conversion away from Islam in the United Kingdom is even sparser.³ There appears to be almost no published research on this subject, either qualitative or quantitative.⁴ An extensive search for material putting a number on how many people have converted away from Islam in the United Kingdom located a solitary article published in *The Times* in 2005, where it was claimed that 10–15 percent of Muslims in Western societies had left Islam.⁵ At the time this was equated to about 200,000 Muslims.

The lack of quantitative analysis for both these phenomena is often justified by the absence of reliable data. Although a question on religion was

introduced for the England and Wales Census 2001 and Scotland's Census 2001 (and repeated in both censuses in 2011), the England and Wales census asked a single voluntary question on religion ("What is your religion?") which does not provide any information about change of religion. However, the Scottish Census 2001 asked two questions: "What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?" (or 'current religion') and "What religion, religious denomination or body were you brought up in?" (or 'religion of upbringing'). Cross-referencing answers to these two questions allows change of religion to be tracked for individuals and so converts to and from Islam (or any other religion) can be identified.

This paper presents a quantitative description of conversion away from Islam using data from Scotland's Census 2001. At the end of the paper, drawing on the results obtained, an estimate for the number of converts from Islam in England and Wales will be generated and compared to estimates for the number of converts to Islam, although there are important provisos which will need to be noted in relation to these estimates.

Analysis of Conversion away from Islam

Data on converts away from Islam from Scotland's Census 2001 was obtained through the commissioned table, "Religion of Upbringing by Ethnic Group and Current Religion" (ID Number 21274) from the General Register Office for Scotland.⁶ It should be noted that both questions were voluntary and some individuals did not give an answer to one or both of the questions; individuals who did not answer both of the questions on religion will be excluded from this investigation as change of religion cannot be tracked for these individuals.

The number for religion of upbringing is adjusted to take account of those who may not have indicated a current religion, and then the number of 'leavers' (that is those who have converted away from their religion of upbringing) is obtained by subtracting the number of 'stayers' (those whose current religion is the same as their religion of upbringing) from the adjusted number for religion of upbringing. By comparing the number of leavers with the adjusted number for religion of upbringing of each of the eight religious categories (for the purpose of this investigation the category 'None', that is those with no religious affiliation, will be counted and referred to as a 'religion'), the proportion of leavers can be calculated and a direct comparison can be made between the different religious categories. Using a similar

approach, the number of ‘joiners’ (that is those who have converted to their current religion) for each religious category is calculated so that an indication of ‘net change’ can be determined (where ‘gainers’ have more joiners than leavers, and ‘losers’ have more leavers than joiners). The net change can be expressed as a percentage of the total for religion of upbringing to allow comparison between the religious categories (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Religion of upbringing, leavers and net change for eight religious categories*

Religion	Upbringing	Leavers	As % of upbringing	Net change indicator
Christian	3,655,990	545,077	14.9%	Loser (-13.2%)
Buddhist	4,541	1,395	30.7%	Gainer (+44.9%)
Hindu	5,792	555	9.6%	Loser (-6.3%)
Jewish	7,055	1,394	19.8%	Loser (-13.4%)
Muslim	41,590	1,175	2.8%	Gainer (+0.1%)
Sikh	6,576	625	9.5%	Loser (-5.1%)
Any other	7,823	2,495	31.9%	Gainer (+224.1%)
None	883,778	69,920	7.9%	Gainer (+52.5%)
Total	4,613,145	622,636	13.5%	

Source: based on data from General Register Office for Scotland, commissioned table 21274

Four religious categories are classified as overall ‘gainers’ and four as overall ‘losers’. ‘Muslim’ is amongst the gainers, but the net gain is so marginal that it would be more accurate to characterize it as ‘holding steady’.

Focusing specifically on ‘Muslim’, there were 41,590 individuals with a religion of upbringing of ‘Muslim’ and of these 1,175 were leavers – that is 2.8 percent. ‘Muslim’ has by far the smallest proportion of leavers amongst all of the eight religious categories. ‘Muslim’ is the least likely group to convert away from their religion of upbringing.

By cross-referencing religion of upbringing and current religion, a breakdown of the destination religion for leavers in each religious category can be obtained (see Table 2). In some cases the actual numbers involved are very small (less than 10) and so calculated percentages cannot be considered meaningful (indicated with an asterisk in the table).

Table 2: *Destination religion for leavers for eight religious categories*

Religion of upbringing	Destination religion							
	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Any other	None
Christian	-	0.4%	< 0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	< 0.1%	2.3%	97.0%
Buddhist	22.2%	-	0.4%	0.1%*	0.8%	0.3%*	4.9%	71.4%
Hindu	21.4%	2.3%	-	0.4%*	11.0%	2.0%	5.8%	57.1%
Jewish	31.7%	1.9%	0.4%*	-	0.4%*	4.0%	6.2%	55.5%
Muslim	18.5%	1.1%	1.2%	0.3%*	-	2.6%	4.3%	72.0%
Sikh	43.7%	1.4%*	0.6%*	5.0%	5.9%	-	3.7%	39.7%
Any other	41.3%	0.9%	0.3%*	0.4%	2.0%	0.7%	-	54.4%
None	87.5%	1.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.1%	10.3%	-

Source: based on data from General Register Office for Scotland, commissioned table 21274

A majority move to ‘None’ (no religion) is a trend which is seen in all except two of the other religious categories; from a high of 97.0 percent of ‘Christian’ leavers to a low of 54.4 percent of ‘Any other’ leavers. The only exceptions are ‘Sikh’ leavers, where there is no single destination which accounts for more than 50 percent of leavers (although 43.7 percent move to ‘Christian’ and 39.7 percent move to ‘None’) and ‘None’ leavers, where 87.5 percent moved to ‘Christian’.

Again, focusing specifically on ‘Muslim’, the majority of ‘Muslim’ leavers moved to ‘None’ (72.0 percent of all leavers) and just under one fifth moved to ‘Christian’ (18.5 percent of all leavers). The other religious categories accounted for less than 10 percent of the total; the next largest category was ‘Any other’ making up 4.3 percent of the total. When relative frequencies of leavers from all religious categories are compared, ‘Muslim’ leavers are the second most likely to move to ‘None’ (after ‘Christian’). While for ‘Muslim’ leavers ‘Christian’ is the second most likely destination religion, when relative frequencies are compared, they are actually the least likely to become ‘Christian’.

A more nuanced understanding of ‘Muslim’ leavers can be gained by taking ethnicity into consideration. ‘Muslim’ is not an ethnically homogenous group

and although over 80 percent of those with a ‘Muslim’ upbringing are from the Asian ethnic groups⁷ (with two-thirds from the ‘Pakistani’ ethnic group), there are significant minorities from the other ethnic groups. There is significant variance in the proportion of leavers for each ethnic group (see Table 3), ranging from figures of over 30 percent for ‘Black Caribbean’ (36.4 percent) and ‘Chinese’ (31.0 percent) to figures of less than 2 percent for ‘Bangladeshi’ (1.8 percent) and ‘Pakistani’ (1.3 percent).

Table 3: *Ethnic distribution for Muslim upbringing and leavers and net change*

Ethnic group	As % of Muslim population	Leavers as % of upbringing	Leavers as % of all leavers	Net change indicator
White British	1.9%	15.3%	10.0%	Gainer (+75.0%)
White Irish	< 0.1%	18.8%	0.3%	Gainer (+106.3%)
Other White	4.4%	8.3%	12.9%	Loser (-2.3%)
Indian	2.1%	3.8%	2.9%	Loser (-1.1%)
Pakistani	67.7%	1.3%	30.9%	Loser (-0.7%)
Bangladeshi	4.0%	1.8%	2.5%	Loser (-1.2%)
Other Asian	6.4%	4.4%	10.1%	Loser (-3.1%)
Black Caribbean	< 0.1%	36.4%	0.3%	Gainer (+18.2%)
Black African	2.3%	4.9%	4.0%	Loser (-3.4%)
Other Black	0.2%	2.1%	0.2%	-
Chinese	0.1%	31.0%	1.1%	Loser (-19.1%)
Other Ethnic	7.66%	5.6%	15.2%	Loser (-4.5%)
All Mixed	3.17%	8.5%	9.5%	Loser (-1.4%)

Source: based on data from General Register Office for Scotland, commissioned table 21274

These differences mean that the ethnic group breakdown of ‘Muslim’ leavers diverges significantly from the ethnic breakdown of those with a ‘Muslim’ upbringing overall. What is of particular interest is that those ethnic groups which are normally identified as ‘Muslim’ (that is ‘Bangladeshi’ and ‘Pakistani’) have a very low proportion of leavers (and so are greatly under-represented amongst ‘Muslim’ leavers), while those ethnic groups which are not normally considered as ‘Muslim’, and hence perceived as ‘Muslim’ through conversion (that is ‘Black Caribbean’, ‘White British’, and ‘White Irish’), have a much higher proportion of leavers. When net change is considered, all ethnic groups except the three ‘convert’ groups are losers, although apart from ‘Chinese’ the net change is relatively small (less than 5 percent).

An analysis of the destination of leavers by ethnic group shows that while most ethnic groups follow the overall pattern for ‘Muslim’ leavers (with all but four of the ethnic groups having a majority of leavers moving to ‘None’), there are interesting variations in the destination of leavers between the various ethnic groups (see Table 4).

Table 4: *Destination religion for leavers from Muslim by ethnic group*

Ethnic group	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Sikh	Any other	None
White British	28.0%	1.7%	0.9%	2.6%	1.7%	11.9%	53.4%
White Irish	66.7%	-	-	-	-	-	33.3%
Other White	21.7%	0.7%	-	-	1.3%	3.3%	73.0%
Indian	8.8%	2.9%	11.8%	-	2.9%	11.8%	61.8%
Pakistani	13.2%	-	2.2%	-	2.8%	3.3%	78.5%
Bangladeshi	27.6%	-	-	3.5%	3.5%	-	65.5%
Other Asian	10.9%	2.5%	-	-	0.8%	5.0%	80.7%
Black Caribbean	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0%
Black African	48.9%	2.1%	-	-	-	4.3%	44.7%
Other Black	100.0%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chinese	15.4%	30.8%	-	-	7.7%	-	46.2%
Other Ethnic	17.9%	0.6%	0.6%	-	6.7%	0.6%	73.7%
All Mixed	16.1%	-	-	-	-	6.3%	77.7%
Total	18.5%	1.1%	1.2%	0.3%	2.6%	4.3%	72.0%

Source: based on data from General Register Office for Scotland, commissioned table 21274

‘White Irish’, ‘Black African’ and ‘Other Black’ leavers have an overly large proportion moving to ‘Christian’ (the religious category more usually associated with these ethnic groups). ‘Chinese’ leavers have an overly large proportion moving to ‘Buddhist’ (the religion more usually associated with ‘Chinese’), while ‘Indian’ have an overly large proportion moving to ‘Hindu’ (again, the religion more usually associated with ‘Indian’).

Considering ‘Muslim’ leavers overall and looking at the breakdown by destination religion for individual ethnic groups, 24.3 percent of all leavers were ‘Pakistani’ with a destination of ‘None’, 11.2 percent were ‘Other Ethnic’ with a destination of ‘None’, 9.4 percent were ‘Other White’ with a destination of ‘None’, 8.2 percent were ‘Other Asian’ with a destination of ‘None’, 7.4 percent were ‘All Mixed’ with a destination of ‘None’ and 5.4 percent were ‘White British’ with a destination of ‘None’.

Reliability of Data and Further Questions

The starting numbers for religion of upbringing for some ethnic groups – particularly ‘White Irish’, ‘Black Caribbean’ and ‘Chinese’ – are small, so the numbers for leavers for these ethnic groups are very small. The calculated proportion for leavers and the destination breakdown for these ethnic groups should be treated with caution as the actions of individuals will have a large (and possibly unrepresentative) impact on the figures.

The data raises several questions worthy of further investigation, particularly with regard to the ethnic groups which are normally thought of as convert groups. The fact that there are individuals from these ethnic groups who have ‘Muslim’ as their religion of upbringing may be seen as somewhat surprising – although the numbers are very low apart from for the ‘White British’ ethnic group. That these ethnic groups are over-represented in terms of leavers is more surprising. An initial possible explanation for this (that these are individuals who have converted to ‘Muslim’, but later changed their minds and become ‘Muslim’ leavers) must immediately be dismissed – the change in religion reported in the census data is from the religion of upbringing (assumed to mean the religion of childhood). The equally interesting (and much more difficult to investigate) phenomenon of multiple changes of religion is not captured by the census questions.

Applying Figures from Scotland to England and Wales

Using a refined version of an approach which has previously been applied in estimating the number of converts to Islam in the United Kingdom,⁸ the number of leavers in England and Wales can be estimated. For each ethnic group an estimate for the number of leavers for both 2001 and 2011 is calculated based on the known proportion of leavers derived from the data from Scotland’s Census 2001 for that ethnic group. In order to provide some further context for these estimates, the numbers are compared to the estimated number of joiners for each ethnic group and a net change figure is determined (see Table 5).

Table 5: *Estimated leavers and joiners for Muslim by ethnic group*

Ethnic group	2001 Leavers	2001 Joiners	2001 net change	2011 Leavers	2011 Joiners	2011 net change
White British	4,946	29,258	24,312	6,062	35,862	29,800
White Irish	76	508	432	164	1,094	930
Other White	9,456	6,408	-3,048	10,729	7,271	-3,458
Indian	5,019	3,542	-1,477	7,515	5,305	-2,210
Pakistani	8,420	4,036	-4,384	13,167	6,312	-6,855
Bangladeshi	4,513	1,556	-2,957	6,992	2,411	-4,581
Other Asian	4,006	1,212	-2,794	8,655	2,618	-6,037
Black Caribbean	1,194	1,791	597	1,959	2,938	979
Black African	4,776	1,524	-3,252	10,294	3,285	-7,009
Other Black	117	117	-	1,173	1,173	-
Chinese	257	99	-158	2,746	1,056	-1,690
Other Ethnic	3,254	673	-2,581	6,464	1,336	-5,128
All Mixed	5,265	4,419	-846	8,405	7,054	-1,351
Total	51,299	55,143	3,844	84,325	77,715	-6,610

Source: based on data from ONS Census 2001, Table S104 and data from General Register Office for Scotland, commissioned table 21274

It is estimated that there were 51,299 ‘Muslim’ leavers in 2001 (as opposed to 55,143 joiners), giving a small net increase (joiners exceeded leavers). In 2011, it is estimated that there were 84,325 leavers (as opposed to 77,715 joiners), giving a small net loss. While three ethnic groups show net gains in both 2001 and 2011 (‘White British’, ‘White Irish’ and ‘Black Caribbean’), all the other ethnic groups show net losses in 2001 and 2011. The move from small overall net increase in 2001 to small overall net loss in 2011 is explained by the change in the ethnic group composition of ‘Muslim’ from 2001 to 2011 – those groups which are net losers have increased relatively more than the ‘convert’ groups.

It should be noted that these estimates are based on the assumption that there are sufficient similarities between individual ethno-religious groups in Scotland and in England and Wales to allow the application of trends for the one to the other. However, a number of these groups (specifically all the ‘Other’ groups, the ‘Black African’ group and the ‘Mixed’ group) cover a multiplicity of backgrounds within their own group and this makes portability of trends for these groups somewhat questionable. The appropriateness of applying trends identified in 2001 in Scotland to data

collected in 2011 in England and Wales may also be questioned and this assumes that there is no change in tendency for these trends to occur. Further, it should be noted that no estimate can be made for the ethnic group 'Arab' which was introduced in 2011 and accounts for 6.6 percent of the 'Muslim' population of England and Wales.

Final Remarks

Conversion away from Islam is seen as a 'difficult' topic, particularly given the view, held by some groups and individuals within the Muslim community and beyond,⁹ that the consequences for such an act are extremely serious. It may be claimed that the source data (Scotland's Census 2001) will be an under-reporting, as individuals will not want to admit to leaving, even in a government survey, so any estimates based on this will be under-estimates.

However, based on the available data the following conclusions can be drawn:

- People with a religion of upbringing of 'Muslim' are the least likely to convert to another religion due to the very low rate for leavers amongst those from 'Pakistani' and 'Bangladeshi' ethnic groups.
- The majority of 'Muslim' leavers move to 'None' (no religion) in common with the majority of the other religious categories.
- Estimates for England and Wales suggest that 'Muslim' has changed from a marginal net gainer in 2001 to a marginal net loser in 2011 – overall conversion to Islam is cancelled out by conversion away from Islam.
- The proportion (and numbers) of leavers quoted by *The Times* in 2005 is not supported by the data from Scotland's Census 2011 or the estimates for England and Wales.
- Suggestions that conversion has played any part in the rise in total numbers for Muslims in the United Kingdom are unfounded – if anything it is likely that 'Muslim' will become more of a net loser over time as 'traditional' Muslim ethnic groups increase in size through birth and immigration.

Finally, the numbers presented for England and Wales are estimates only and should not be taken as definitive figures.

Notes

¹ Although there are numerous Islamic missionary books such as: Arafat El-Ashi, *Why We Embraced Islam: Fascinating Stories of New Muslims* (New Delhi: Wise Publications, 2005); Ebrahim Bawany, *Islam – Our Choice* (Cairo: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Masri, 1961); and many websites with conversion stories which provide interesting source material.

² Probably the best known published academic sources are: Ali Kose, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts* (London: Keegan Paul International, 1996); Adlin Adnan, *New Muslims in Britain* (London: Ta-Ha, 1999); Kate Zebiri, *British Muslim Converts: Choosing Alternative Lives* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

³ There are numerous ‘anti-Islam’ books (which can be seen as corresponding to Islamic missionary books): Ibn Warraq, *Leaving Islam: Apostates Speak Out* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003); and many websites with ‘leaving’ stories which provide interesting source material.

⁴ Although a recent ESRC-funded research project carried out by Dr Simon Cottee entitled “The Apostates: A Qualitative Study of Ex-Muslims in Britain” may lead to some publications: see <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-4308/read> (accessed 16 May 2014).

⁵ Anthony Browne, “Muslim apostates cast out and at risk from faith and family”, *The Times*, 5 February 2005, 26.

⁶ General Register Office for Scotland, 2001 Census Commissioned Tables, <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm/scotcen2/scotcen21/scotcen22.html> (accessed 12 April 2014).

⁷ The Asian ethnic groups are Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Other Asian.

⁸ M. A. Kevin Brice, “A Minority within a Minority: A Report on Converts to Islam in the United Kingdom”, *Faith Matters*, <http://faith-matters.org/images/stories/fm-reports/a-minority-within-a-minority-a-report-on-converts-to-islam-in-the-uk.pdf> (accessed 12 April 2014).

⁹ Although there are different views on the permissibility and consequences of conversion away (apostasy), it is probably fair to say that a dominant view is that such an act is seen in a negative way and is considered by some to be punishable by death.

Ṭayyib: British Muslim Piety and the Welfare of Animals for Food

RUTH HELEN CORBET

Abstract

Although halal (permitted) and ṭayyib (good) can be applicable to all aspects of Muslim life,¹ it is halal meat production and consumption that gives rise to controversial media coverage in non-Muslim majority countries. This research probes beyond the “halal hysteria” of the British press to examine the role of ṭayyib. A silence in classical observations concerning ṭayyib has allowed members of the Muslim community to use a re-appropriated form of ijtihād, or independent reason, to extend the minimum translation of ‘good’ to include stewardship over animals. Some Muslims, prompted by the tensions between religious ideology and factory farming, are making greater demands on the concept of halal. This is the context of the fieldwork extracts presented in this paper, which begin to reveal a slower and quieter halal market within the UK. Away from the noise of sensational newspaper headlines, ṭayyib is being used as a partner to halal, in order to promote ethical meat production and consumption as an expression of faith. This niche market challenges popular perceptions of Islamic food regulations by demonstrating a direct link between Muslim piety and the welfare of animals for food.

Introduction

O ye people! Eat of what is on earth, lawful [halal] and good [*ṭayyib*];
 And do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One,
 for he is to you an avowed enemy.²
 (*Surah Al-Baqarah*: 168)

“Horror at halal slaughterhouse” and “Halal secret of Pizza Express”³; these are typical headlines from the British popular press on the topic of halal meat. Such sensationalized associations with animal suffering ensure halal continues to be debated amongst Muslims and non-Muslims. However, it is *ṭayyib* that has caught my attention, because its meaning is elusive. The Qur’an joins *ṭayyib* with halal in relation to food,⁴ but traditional and academic reference texts simply translate *ṭayyib* as ‘good’ or ‘wholesome’ without further elaboration.⁵ The process of *ijtihād* or independent reason is considered a historical legal expertise of the classical ‘ulama’ class,⁶ but the Internet has

made “the tools for *ijtihād*” accessible to individuals as “Islamic informed interpretation” for the purpose of personal decision-making.⁷ Muslim contributions on ethical internet sites such as IslamicConcern.com indicate that *ijtihād* is providing a deeper criteria for *ṭayyib*; one that extends beyond the translation of ‘good’ to evoke human responsibility and accountability towards animals used as food. There have been recent academic works on the status of animals in Islam by Qur’anic scholar Sarra Tlili,⁸ and in the broader context of Muslim culture, Richard Foltz;⁹ but neither work *ṭayyib* in a Qur’anic or contemporary form.

This paper investigates the rise of *ṭayyib* in the consciousness of British Muslim culture in response to non-Muslim and intra-Muslim debates, which perceive a conflict between religious ideology and intensive food production. Through the initial findings of a larger piece of work the study will provide an outline of key Qur’anic concepts relevant to the discussion on intensive meat production, controversy over religious slaughter and the need to improve the existence of livestock. It is against this background that I introduce fieldwork extracts that will profile three UK enterprises, namely the Halal Food Festival, Abraham Natural Food Produce and Willowbrook Farm. These provide different examples of how *ṭayyib* can be applied, in varying depth, to provide a direct link between British Muslim piety and the welfare of animals for food.

Background

Qur’anic Concepts

The Qur’an clearly states in Q6:165, how humanity will be held accountable for its actions: “It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you.” In this verse, Richard Foltz interprets *khalīfa* as humankind taking on the role of protective stewardship over the “gifts” of creation and its animals, a status that carries great responsibility.¹⁰ Despite such interpretations, other views of *khalīfa* have claimed “full-authority” over creation, on the basis that it was created solely to serve humankind.¹¹ But the Qur’an warns against such arrogance. In Q7:73-84, it tells of the people of Thamud, who are materialistic and “godless”, and control access to God’s “free gifts of nature”. A she-camel is sent to test them, and they are asked to “leave her to graze”, but they cripple her and the people are destroyed; a reminder that they did not create the camel or the grazing. As Q6:165 above indicates,

animals have an intrinsic value to God beyond human use, as “gifts” animals become a divine test by which God will “try” or test humanity. In addition, the striking verse Q6:38 declares, “there is not an animal (that lives)” that does not form “communities like you” and Q24:41 tells how, “Each one [animal] knows its own (mode of prayer) and praise.” Fazlun Khalid believes this submission by the animals is their *fiṭra*, also the “primordial” or “original” form of the Muslim.¹² The Qur’an highlights the positive status of animals by comparing their communities to those of humans, and Sarra Tlili argues that although the Qur’an is a guide for humans it contains evidence that animals also “share in divine attention”.¹³

Intensive Meat Production

The Islamic concepts explored above provide positive ideologies, but it seems questionable that they can be compatible with current intensive farming methods. In the 1930s, the MP Thomas Moore commented on Muslims and Jews producing meat according to their own customs: “It is not wise at the present time to interfere with the fundamental right of any race. My view is that we should put our own house in order first before seeking to put others right.”¹⁴ It is worth reflecting on the current ‘order’ of the ‘house’, within which Muslim and non-Muslim, supplier and consumer, must operate. In *Caring for Farm Animals*, David Fraser outlines a world where advances in technologies such as refrigeration and transportation have destroyed local markets.¹⁵ The late author Imam Al-Hafiz B. A. Masri claimed the drive to produce maximum profit per unit meant meat production had led humankind to deny livestock their *fiṭra* by treating them as nothing more than vegetables.¹⁶ In general, it is easy to blame the producers, but in an open market it is the consumers’ quest for economy over animal welfare that is responsible. For example, Professor John McInerney remarked in his 2004 report for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), “Higher hen welfare as a merit good will not find much uptake among those to whom its merit is neither recognised nor valued, and who continue to select the lowest priced eggs that are made available”; for this reason, “a retailer is unlikely to impose these requirements uniformly across all livestock products sold (because they wish to cater for the breadth of customer preferences)”.¹⁷ This state of affairs is likely to continue whilst industrial techniques continue to distance the consumer from animal suffering; this combined with the “narcissistic need *not* to know” means that it is difficult for individuals to acknowledge that the “object” on their plate came from a living breathing “subject”.¹⁸

Controversy

For the UK Muslim community, there is the additional challenge and distraction of negative media coverage of *dhabīah*, the slaughter process for halal meat. This is caused by the assumption that all halal meat is from non-stunned sources and is infiltrating public food outlets, such as Westminster, schools, hospitals and supermarkets.¹⁹ The political journalist Medhi Hasan has labelled the reaction “halal hysteria”;²⁰ a fitting description as according to the UK government’s own sources only 3 percent of cattle are slaughtered without stunning, and over 80 percent of animals for halal meat are stunned,²¹ suggesting a limited supply and distribution. Despite such information, a parliamentary campaign for compulsory labelling of non-stunned meat continues as a matter of urgency. Lord Palmer challenged this, stating that meat from animals killed by a bolt, electrocution or gas should also be labelled. He also stated that the number of deaths that involve mis-stunning (ranging from 8 percent to 31 percent of animals slaughtered) exceeds the numbers for non-stun.²² These figures are supported by the findings of the charity Animal Aid which provided video evidence that led to the suspension of slaughter licenses and legal action against abattoirs and individuals. There were vets present at all of the filming locations, but none were observing the stunning rooms where it was not uncommon for animals to be stunned between two and five times.²³ This undermines figures provided to the government by the Food Standards Agency,²⁴ which have been used by the British Veterinary Association to claim that 99 percent of stunning is successful and that mis-stunning is not therefore a defence that religious groups can use to retain exemption.²⁵

Returning to the debate on labelling, I would contend that all means of death must be provided on labels to maintain consumer choice; to do otherwise, is to ‘culturalize’ cruelty, making one minority group appear responsible for the suffering of animals used for food.²⁶ This seems unreasonable when 19 million quadrupeds and 750 million birds are slaughtered per year in the UK alone. Whilst the struggle to maintain and negotiate the basic right to slaughter animals according to religious beliefs continues, there are those who feel the integrity of the human-animal relationships outlined in the Islamic scripture has been neglected.

Fieldwork Extracts

The Halal Food Festival

On 27 September 2013 the Halal Food Festival opened at ExCel London for three days of cooking demonstrations and lessons along with a chance to experience or buy high quality produce. The festival's webpage states, "For meat to be halal, the animals need to be cared for with compassion and consideration too. As well as halal, Muslims are commanded to eat food that is *tayyib*, meaning pure or wholesome."²⁷ Whilst visiting the festival, which was attended by buyers from the major supermarkets and Harrods, I observed Muslim and non-Muslim exhibitors. Speaking to a non-Muslim exhibitor, I heard how she felt there was a shared concern between all the businesses regarding the quality of food and its ethical sources. This was the kind of atmosphere the founders of the festival, Imran Kausar and Noman Khawaja, were hoping to achieve. Imran explained to me that they wanted to divert the negative discourses of the media toward something more positive, "to refocus on food as a unifying theme regardless of faith", as it "breaks boundaries". Despite animal welfare being a shared concern, Imran acknowledged that conversations about stunning could be polarising; he said, "Differences in opinion can lead to emotional debates, but our view is that; however an individual defines halal, it's fine, we need to work with everyone." He also felt things were further complicated because "a lot of Muslims think that organic is unstunned, but it has to be stunned... to get it an organic certificate".

Imran suggested that, "the Qur'an future proofs itself by not being too specific on certain issues," and one of these is *tayyib*. He thought that in the contemporary context people were required "to avoid intensive farming", which means considering everything from the rearing of the animals to reducing the amount of meat individuals eat; all of this is needed to show animals "respect because they are God's creatures as well". What is important about *tayyib* is that it expresses "the value Islam brings to food" and shifts conversations away from the technicalities of halal to "the broader issues that are important to everyone". Imran and Noman intended the festival to be inclusive. Imran explained, "We deliberately planned the branding, so it wasn't ethnically focused... the logo for the food festival has the fleur-de-lys... we wanted everyone to recognize the European heritage and that it just happens to be halal."

Abraham Natural Produce

Present at the Halal Food Festival was Abraham Natural Produce, based in Kent and originally founded by Mohammad Ridha Payne, who after his negative experiences of halal meat in terms of both quality and traceability, decided to supply just a small group of friends with certified organic produce. The current director Zeki Hassan Ismail explains that the Soil Association's criterion was taken as the benchmark for their produce because of two factors. Firstly, "Organic standards embody within them the Islamic concept of *ṭayyib*, which literally means 'pure or natural'." Following these farming methods ensures their produce is not only reared ethically, "living good and natural lives, grazing in organic grass fields on farms, not warehouses", but is also "free of artificial additives and chemicals, injected hormones and alien bodies". Secondly, the process of certification brings with it a responsibility to make sure everything is traceable, from the farms that rear the animals to the final products that reach the customers. Most importantly, being certified means they have to be open to an external audit, which confirms that "they kept their word on what they sold". Zeki states, "This was, and still is, a radical concept within the halal community, which is mostly based on supplying goods on trust from the butcher to the public."

The Abraham Natural Produce stall was one of busiest at the festival; it was not until the second day that I managed to speak to Zeki in person. He explained that many people had visited the stall expressing their relief at finding an ethical source of halal meat because they had stopped eating it altogether. He mused, "How many Muslims have stopped eating meat?" and went on to explain that the company's role is to source organic and free-range meat from local Soil Association farms and then personally conduct the slaughter of each animal at a nearby abattoir. He humbly said that Willowbrook Farm was a genuine inspiration as they were really "doing it", because they are able to raise their own animals.

Willowbrook Farm

Willowbrook Farm is the home of Lufti and Ruby Radwan and their family, who live in low impact environmental buildings powered by wood burners and solar roof tiles. These surround the almost-completed farm house, built with local stone and cob (clay, sand and straw). The clay is drawn from the pond a few metres away. A walk with Lufti took in the compost toilets, a small wooden prayer room and various livestock buildings housing their poultry and sheep. He explains that their "objective is to achieve a balance and live in

harmony with the environment”, and he sees no separation between his work on the farm and the rest of his life; Islam runs through everything. Lufti is frustrated and disappointed when enquiries inevitably descend into conversations about, “cutting of throats... as this simply reveals the ignorance of the questioner”. Lufti states that as “all animals in the UK... have their ‘throats slit’ and most of halal slaughter uses a pre-stun... the only thing that divides Muslim and non-Muslim slaughter is the remembrance of the bounty of God”.

“More importantly,” he reminds us, “the wrong questions are being asked as little energy is spent in probing inhumane rearing practices, which affect almost all mass-produced meat, Muslim and non-Muslim. Lufti continues, “These result in chronic pain and suffering during the many months of poor animal husbandry, before the point of slaughter, or due to the intolerable conditions of mass slaughter processes.” Lufti states that, “Not a single Muslim scholar objects *per se* to stunning and the minority who consider it unacceptable does so only because, in reality, it is often inappropriately applied, resulting in death by stunning.”

Although Willowbrook is managed organically it does not have Soil Association approval for the abattoirs it uses. For the poultry, they prefer to use a small-scale local abattoir where the birds can be kept naturally calm due to the small numbers. For the sheep, their abattoir uses a minimal stun and their beef is provided through a kosher source. Lufti feels the concept of *tayyib* has been overlooked, “as it would not have been an issue for Muslims or indeed humans before the last 100 years. All food was organic until the advent of the modern age.” He asserts, “Muslims just like the rest of humanity have been duped into consuming factory-farmed food without considering its unlawfulness in the Qur’an.” In the present context of Oxfordshire, Lufti is trying to consider the fine balance between animals and the environment. He only uses heritage breeds comfortable with free-range conditions, but he still worries that the turkeys for Christmas are not as happy as geese are in the winter, so customers are encouraged to have a goose instead.

Conclusion

Initial research indicates that amidst growing anxieties about animal welfare in farming and slaughter methods, Qur’anic themes of stewardship provide

a consoling ideology of compassion towards the divine gifts and communities of animals in worship to God. However, this positive status does not translate into intensive farming, which often corrupts the animal by denying its right to worship according to its *fiṭra*. The technicalities of slaughter and negative news-reporting further obscure and confuse the steps required to restore balance. It is through the *ijtihād* of the contemporary Muslim community that the intrinsic value of animals is reinstated by a discourse that interprets *ṭayyib* as achievable only through considering the needs of the animal in life as well as death. This is the aspiration of ethically-based enterprises that are able and willing to take practical steps to provide produce in keeping with the spiritual needs of their customers. This is for those who wish their consumption to express their faith by moving towards a personal role in stewardship. In this scenario, Muslim piety is directly involved in improving animal welfare as it promotes *ṭayyib* as an ethical partner to halal, contributing towards to a deeper understanding of Islamic food regulations within the Muslim and non-Muslim communities of the UK.

Notes

¹ Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam (Al-Halal Wal Haram Fil Islam)*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Al Falah Foundation, 2001).

² References and quotes from the Qur'an in the text are from: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an*, 9th ed. (Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications, 1997).

³ Abul Taher and Valerie Elliot, "Horror at halal slaughterhouse," *Daily Mail* (12 April 2014); Daniel Jones, "Halal secret of Pizza Express," *The Sun* (7 May 2014).

⁴ Q2:168; Q5:88; Q8:69; Q16:114.

⁵ J.D. McAuliffe, ed. *Encyclopaedia of the Quran* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas and E.K. Rowson, eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam - Three 2011-3* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Ibn Rushd, "The Distinguished Jurist Primer," 2006 ed. (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1994).

⁶ Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (1984): 3-41.

⁷ Alexis Kort, "Dar al-Cyber Islam: Women, domestic violence, and the Islamic reformation on the World Wide Web," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25 (2005): 363-83; Heba Raouf Ezzat, "Women and Ijtihad: Towards a New Islamic Discourse," American University in Cairo and American University in Cairo Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/521929> (Abstract accessed 19 June 2014).

⁸ Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur'an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁹ Richard Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition And Muslim Cultures* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006).

- ¹⁰ Richard Foltz, “‘This she-camel of God is a sign to you’: Dimensions of Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Culture,” in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, ed. Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 150.
- ¹¹ For an assessment of this debate see Jaakar Sheikh Idres, “Is man the vicegerent of God?,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1 (1990): 99-110.
- ¹² Fazlun M. Khalid, “Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics,” in *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Foltz (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005).
- ¹³ Sarra Tlili, “The meaning of the Qur’anic word ‘dābba’: ‘animals’ or ‘nonhuman animals?’” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 12 (2010): 167-87.
- ¹⁴ Thomas Moore MP, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 12/12/1930, Cols.701-785 quoted in Roger Charlton and Ronald Kaye, “The politics of religious slaughter: An ethno-religious case study,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 12 (1985): 490-503.
- ¹⁵ David Fraser, “Caring for Farm Animals,” in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, Paul Waldau and Kimberly Patton, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 550.
- ¹⁶ A.H.B.A. Masri, *Animal Welfare in Islam* (Markfield: Islamic Foundation Limited, 2009), 41.
- ¹⁷ Professor John McInerney, “Animal Welfare, Economics and Policy,” 2014 vols. (DEFRA, 2004).
- ¹⁸ Carol Adams, “A Very Rare and Difficult Thing,” in *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*, Paul Waldau and Kimberly Patton, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 600-1; 595.
- ¹⁹ Danny Penman, “Halal meat is being served in schools, hospitals and pubs - even though vets say Islamic slaughter is cruel,” *Daily Mail* (11 November 2010); Macer Hall, “MPs’ anger after they are secretly served halal meat,” *Daily Express* (18 November 2010).
- ²⁰ Mehdi Hasan, “Halal Hysteria,” *New Statesman* (9 May 2012).
- ²¹ Christopher Barclay, “Religious Slaughter,” House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/SC/1314 (2012).
- ²² House of Lords debate, 16 January 2014, Column GC177, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/lords/by-date/#session=1&year=2014&month=0&day=16>.
- ²³ Kate Fowler, “Animal Aid,” http://www.animalaid.org.uk/h/n/NEWS/news_slaughter//3087// (accessed 19 June 2014).
- ²⁴ House of Commons,debate, 24 March 2014, cited Column 134W, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons/by-date/#session=1&year=2014&month=2&day=24>.
- ²⁵ The British Veterinary Association, “New figures expose myth of mis-stunning in British abattoirs,” <http://www.bva.co.uk/news/3755.aspx> (accessed 5 April 2014).
- ²⁶ I use culturalize here in the sense defined in Rainer Bauböck, “Beyond Culturalism and Statism: Liberal Responses to Diversity,” in *Eurosphere* (2008).
- ²⁷ “What is Halal?” Halal Food Festival website, <http://halalfoodfestival.com/what-is-halal.php> (accessed 6 August 2013).

Patterns of British Government Engagements with Muslim Faith-based Organizations: The Second Image Reversed?

GERALD FITZGERALD

Abstract

Over the course of the last 25 years, there has been considerable variation in how successive British governments have engaged with Muslim faith-based NGOs at the national level. The primary research question examined in this chapter is how to best account for the longitudinal pulsing between more corporatist and more pluralist patterns of engagement between successive governments and Muslim faith-based NGOs in Britain. This paper argues that overall changes in patterns of engagement along a corporatist-pluralist continuum under successive governments since the late-1980s can be most consistently explained by the effects of international political events and short-term security imperatives, rather than concerns for maintaining community and social cohesion.

Introduction

Over the course of the last 25 years, there has been considerable variation in how successive British governments have engaged with Muslim faith-based NGOs at the national level.¹ In plotting changing patterns of engagement or interest intermediation over time, Schmitter (1974) provides two ideal conceptual types, namely *pluralist* and *corporatist* patterns of engagement, at either ends of a continuum that can be used to measure changes in how states engage with civil society actors over time. Schmitter's conceptualization of a corporatist-pluralist dimension provides specific and measurable tangible properties that systematize the concepts of *corporatism* and *pluralism* (See Table 1).² The primary research question examined in this paper is how to best account for the longitudinal pulsing between more corporatist and more pluralist patterns of engagement between the state and Muslim faith-based NGOs in Britain over the past 25 years.

Table 1: *The corporatist-pluralist dimension*

Measure / Dimension	More Corporatist	More pluralist
No of interest groups	Limited number	Unspecified number
Within a given issue area	Singular	Multiple
Formation	Compulsory	Voluntary
Status	Non-Competitive	Competitive
Structure	Hierarchical	Non-hierarchical
Function	Functionally differentiated	Non-determined
State	Recognizes or licenses	Does not recognize or license
State	Grants a monopoly	Does not grant a monopoly

Source: Adapted from Philippe Schmitter, “Still the Century of Corporatism?” *The Review of Politics* 36, no. 1 (January 1974): 85–131.

Variation over Time in Engagement between the State and Faith-based NGOs

Developments in recent years have marked a departure from Britain’s long-standing tradition of the *quasi-corporatist* structuring of engagement with minority faith-based NGOs. In other words, generally speaking, the British state has tended to favour engagement with a single voluntarily formed interlocutor and has traditionally demonstrated a willingness to amend its institutions—albeit in a somewhat cautious and gradualist manner—in response to specific demands for the accommodation of the needs of minority faith communities as expressed by its privileged interlocutor.³ Historically, privileged faith-based NGOs can point to having exerted considerable influence on domestic legislation as well as British foreign policy.⁴ For example, archival research confirms the more pluralist origins and structuring of interest intermediation between the British state and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. British governments have demonstrated a relatively consistent willingness to accommodate the religious needs of Britain’s Jewish communities, such as the incorporation in various Acts of Parliament of Sunday trading exceptions,⁵ certification of Jewish marriage registrars⁶ and legislative provisions made for *Shechita* (ritual slaughter),⁷ in the face of concerted lobbying efforts by the Board of Deputies. Moreover, day-to-day interactions between the Board of Deputies and the governments of the day over issues such as the plight of co-religionists in foreign lands indicates long-standing stability in patterns of engagement between Jewish faith-based NGOs and the state.

However, the patterns of engagement of successive British governments with Muslim faith-based NGOs have exhibited ‘pulsing’ between more corporatist and more pluralist forms of intermediation over the last 25 years (See Table 2). This pulsing undermines the argument that policy responses can be reliably predicted by national institutional models.⁸ Moreover, this pulsing appears to have occurred relatively independently of transfers of power between political parties, although changes in government and ministerial level personnel, particularly those at the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, have undoubtedly resulted in the redefining of policy and budgetary priorities and changes in terms of with whom—and at what level (i.e. primarily national or local)—successive governments engage with Muslim civil society organizations.⁹

Pulsing in British Governments’ Relations with Muslim Faith-based NGOs

The late 1980s are chosen here as a starting point for this analysis because of a consensus among interviewees across the spectrum, as well as in the secondary literature, on the importance of the Satanic Verses Affair as a critical juncture in the history of the British state’s engagement with Muslim faith-based NGOs. Moreover, both primary and secondary sources indicate broad agreement on a *reactive sequence* that led from the aftermath of the internationalization of the Satanic Verses Affair in the late 1980s to the formation of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in 1997.¹⁰

Table 2: *Changing patterns of engagement between government and Muslim faith-based NGOs*

Timeframe	Critical Juncture	Change in Pattern of Engagement	Change in government Partners
1994-2001	The Satanic Verses Affair	<i>ad hoc pluralist to quasi corporatist</i>	The MCB as a 'privileged interlocutor'
2001-2005	Global War on Terror	<i>quasi corporatist to disengagement</i>	New Labour - MCB relationship in decline New Labour searches for alternative interlocutors
2005-present	July 7th 2005 attacks	<i>co-opted pluralist to diminished co-opted pluralist</i>	De novo creation of interlocutors (e.g. Sufi Muslim Council) Provision of significant financial and/or political support to existing orgs. (e.g. British Muslim Forum / QuilliamFoundation) Founding of MINAB (2006)

In 1994, faced with a multiplicity of interlocutors, with more than one organization claiming to be the legitimate representative of Britain’s Muslim Communities, Conservative Home Secretary John Howard suggested—or demanded—that Muslim faith-based NGOs collaborate to provide better representation and, ultimately, present a unified interlocutor to government. Brighton (2007) and Mandaville (2001) also point to a struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran at this juncture for influence over nascent lobby groups as one explanation for divisiveness among civil society actors at this time (although it is important to note that foreign support for these organizations should be taken as evidence of initial mutual sympathy and common interests rather than demonstrative of a principal-agent relationship).¹¹

While Howard’s role in this meeting has been variously described as a “demand”¹² or a “helpful suggestion”¹³ for the provision of a single interlocutor, it ultimately implied that the extension of state recognition would follow the formation of a body that could act as a surrogate representative of Britain’s Muslim communities. This *quasi-corporatist* structuring of interest intermediation was congruent with historical arrangements whereby the Board of Deputies was privileged as a surrogate representative of Anglo-Jewry.¹⁴ This seminal meeting prompted a consultation process led by a

number of like-minded Muslim faith-based NGOs—primarily Islamist legacy groups—under the aegis of the National Interim Committee on Muslim Affairs, to investigate the possibilities for promoting unity amongst various organizations with proximate mutual interests. These consultations ultimately led to the founding of the Muslim Council of Britain in November 1997.

For several years after its formation, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) enjoyed a honeymoon period in its relationship with the New Labour government. New Labour's presentation of the MCB as "authentic representatives of British Muslims", the use of funding mechanisms to "force independent Muslim bodies to deal with [the MCB]," and the government's instrumental use of the MCB as a proxy for British Muslim opinion further indicates the neo-corporatism inherent in New Labour's engagement strategy at that time.¹⁵ Though technically independent of state control, the MCB came to be pejoratively characterized by some as New Labour's "pet project," "favorite Muslim umbrella organization" and even as "lassi Islamists" because of its perceived proximity to government.¹⁶

It is important not to over-emphasize the role of the MCB as the sole interlocutor for British Muslim communities with New Labour between 1997 and 2001. That is, it is clear that the state was engaging with other Muslim faith-based NGOs at the national-level during this period, although the MCB is widely regarded to have held an especially privileged position. The al-Khoei Foundation, for example, had since 1992 been engaging, in a more understated way, with various government departments at various levels, over issues of particular concern to Britain's Shia communities not represented under the MCB umbrella or by its predecessor organizations.¹⁷

Over time, however, the MCB's organizational structure undoubtedly hampered its effectiveness as it attempted to walk a tightrope between representing a plethora of constituent organizations, while continuing to curry favor with—and maintaining access to—its governmental interlocutors. As an umbrella group that claims to represent several hundred affiliated national, regional and local organizations, mosques, charities and schools, the MCB has also been primarily dependent on volunteers for its staffing needs with a very thin professional executive layer sitting atop this unwieldy umbrella structure. These organizational and structural realities have complicated internal bargaining processes between the MCB's executive and its affiliates and has undoubtedly encumbered its ability to respond decisively

when faced with crisis situations in its engagements with the state. While the MCB's constituency is broad in organizational-structural terms, it has been widely critiqued as being insufficiently inclusive in its representation of the diversity of British Muslims. While the cumbersome nature of dealing with such a large number of affiliated groups has complicated the MCB's engagement with government, the fact that certain sectarian demographics were not well-represented—or represented at all—under the MCB umbrella has made it vulnerable to criticism about its credibility and legitimacy as a representative of British Muslims writ large.

By the early 2000s, New Labour was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the MCB. By this time, the limitations of the MCB as a civil society partner—first expressed in British Muslim media outlets such as *Q News* and later by mainstream broadsheets—were also percolating through government. Central to this disillusionment was the Blair government's adamant rejection of the existence of a causal link between British foreign policy in the context of the 'Global War on Terror' and domestic radicalization.¹⁸ Various interviewees, from across political and sectarian divides, identify the aftermath of 9/11 and the run up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as critical junctures that marked the beginning of a souring relationship between the government and the MCB.¹⁹ Again, a reactive sequence can be identified to explain the reasons behind this growing disillusionment. First, the MCB's public statement on October 9th, 2001 expressing its grave reservations over the impending attacks on Afghanistan infuriated Tony Blair who had engaged in a concerted effort to persuade community leaders to "sell" the American-led bombing campaign.²⁰ The second reason mentioned by interviewees involves a meeting between Prime Minister Tony Blair and representatives of various Muslim faith-based NGOs at 10 Downing Street in late 2002 during which Blair sought to garner support for (or at least mitigate opposition to) the impending invasion of Iraq but was ultimately rebuffed by the MCB and its affiliated groups.²¹

Finally, in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the emergence of a political nexus between MCB-affiliated activists (particularly from the Muslim Association of Britain) and various groups on the political left, in the form of the Stop the War Coalition, crossed a 'red line' of sorts in that it presented a direct political challenge to New Labour from groups that it, ordinarily, would have considered part of its natural constituency.²² What is most significant here is that it was New Labour's short-term foreign policy

considerations—rather than concerns over social cohesion and/or ‘representativeness’—that appear to have provided the impulse for its initial disengagement with the MCB and, ultimately, a shift from a *quasi-corporatist* to a *co-opted pluralist* form of engagement.

Certainly, the various government departments directly involved in engaging with the MCB were aware from an early stage of its limitations as an interlocutor. Primary among these limitations was the MCB’s lack of representativeness (especially a lack of Sufi representation that also made it weak in urban areas in the north of England). Furthermore, the MCB’s perceived proximity to transnational networks (in particular the Jama’at-e-Islami and, to a lesser extent, the Muslim Brotherhood) made it vulnerable to the political and media polemics that tend to swirl around these organizations, despite the fact that the MCB’s domestic political pragmatism demonstrated a divergence from the ideologies of the transnational Islamist organizations with which it has often been identified.²³

In the short-term, the MCB’s instrumental political utility as a partner for New Labour had trumped these concerns. However, as the MCB began to come into conflict with New Labour over foreign policy issues—particularly over the Blair government’s untenable insistence that there was no causal link between British foreign policy and domestic violent extremism—political and media critiques started to hone in on the MCB’s illiberal positions on issues such as homosexuality and arranged marriages, as well as its controversial position of not participating in Holocaust Memorial Day. While the Blair government continued to engage with the MCB between 2002 and 2008, the MCB had undoubtedly lost its privileged status as an interlocutor with the MCB leadership, as one interviewee put it, “still in the room but not listened to.”²⁴

The July 7th, 2005 attacks in London are widely regarded by interviewees as constituting another ‘critical juncture’ in relations between the state and Muslim faith-based NGOs. While New Labour was already attempting to locate alternative interlocutors to the MCB by this point in time, the attacks changed the tenor, scope, and urgency of this process. Substantial funding was soon made available for a wide variety of projects to prevent violent extremism under the aegis of the PREVENT program. The dangling carrot of government funding attracted a plethora of social entrepreneurs who

competed for core funding for their organizations or project funding for specific initiatives. While some Muslim faith-based NGOs jumped enthusiastically into this fray, many expressed concern over the tenor and scope of the government's PREVENT agenda and the potential for its singular focus on Britain's Muslim communities to exacerbate stigmatization and marginalization. Others raised concerns with the surveillance aspects of the PREVENT program and that state funding under PREVENT came with many objectionable strings attached.²⁵

A Shift to State Engineered Plurality

Subsequent to the 7/7 attacks and prior to its disengagement from the MCB in 2009,²⁶ New Labour had already embarked on a process of engineering its own set of interlocutors, either through the provision of substantial political and/or financial support to new start-ups (e.g. The Quilliam Foundation, the Sufi Muslim Council, CENTRI) or by bringing pre-existing Muslim faith-based NGOs into the funding fold (e.g. the primarily Sufi-oriented umbrella group, the British Muslim Forum [BMF]).²⁷ This heralded a new engagement strategy of *co-opted pluralism*. At this juncture, funding choices appear to have been primarily driven by a counter-extremist imperative (e.g. The Quilliam Foundation, CENTRI) and/or an impetus to engineer 'liberal foils' to the MCB by providing political and financial support to faith-based NGOs that were not considered adequately represented by the MCB (e.g. the Sufi Muslim Council and the BMF).

These changes in engagement strategy resulted in the emergence of a new cast of professionalized social entrepreneurs and a faith-based NGO landscape that one interviewee characterized as producers in a government-run "market of ideas",²⁸ with organizations that pitched initiatives that most closely aligned with the PREVENT agenda and the short-term political and security urgencies of the government being those that succeeded in the 'market' (of receiving government funding).²⁹ Many of these newer start-up organizations were even more disconnected from grassroots constituencies than the MCB's executive, from its hundreds of affiliated groups' constituencies. Moreover, many did not even claim to represent a constituency per se with the strategic focus of this new cast of faith-based NGOs tending to focus on specific issue-areas, rather than community representation.

For example, as a think-tank, the Quilliam Foundation is primarily focused on counter-extremist initiatives and sees policymakers as its primary constituency.³⁰ As Quilliam's agenda aligned well with that of government in a post-7/7 environment, it was the recipient of significant financial support from various government departments in its early years of operation. However, given the level of funding it received from government, its singular focus on counter-extremism, its adherence to a problematic 'conveyor-belt' theory of radicalization³¹, and its public criticism of other Muslim faith-based NGOs, Quilliam soon came to be seen by many as complicit in exacerbating the stigmatization and marginalization of Britain's Muslim communities.

Moreover, New Labour moved at this juncture to depoliticize the more politically active Muslim faith-based NGOs. The creation of the Mosques and Imams Advisory Board (MINAB) in 2006 was an initiative effectively midwived by the Home Office that brought together the MCB, the Brotherhood-affiliated Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), the Sufi-dominated BMF, and the Shia-dominated al-Khoei Foundation as affiliates under a single umbrella organization that was tasked with setting standards for mosques and imams throughout Britain.³² MINAB brought together the primary actors that were seen to be broadly representative of the sectarian spectrum of British Muslims. However, the inclusion of the MAB and al-Khoei Foundation (neither of which are mosque organizations) raised eyebrows and has led some to posit that the ultimate aim was to "contain Muslim identity politics and redirect Islamism into pastoral provision."³³

As the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition came to power after the 2010 elections, the pattern of engagement of *co-opted pluralism* that emerged under New Labour post-7/7 was largely retained. However, a number of significant changes occurred, including a shift to a more localized and individualized approach to engagement,³⁴ overall budget cutbacks and a significantly more cautious engagement strategy, particularly with regard to organizations perceived as having an Islamist agenda. Overall, interviewees report a significant reduction in the frequency and scope of engagements across the board with the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government, which some attribute to a lack of political will within the coalition for navigating the intricacies of faith-based engagement.³⁵

Conclusion

Changes in patterns of engagement along a corporatist-pluralist continuum since the late-1980s can be most consistently explained by external politics. From the governmental standpoint, the initial shift from a *ad hoc pluralist* to a *quasi-corporatist* pattern of engagement appears to have been motivated by frustration over the lack of collaboration between multiple interlocutors claiming to represent British Muslims in the years that followed the furor that followed the Satanic Verses Affair, a controversy that was internationalized when Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for the killing of author Salman Rushdie. Some of the ensuing inter-organizational conflict between faith-based NGOs was likely driven by competition between first generation leaderships. Secondary sources point to Saudi Arabian and Iranian funding of lobby groups with initial mutual interests as having exacerbated the divisiveness.³⁶

The midwifing of the MCB, by successive Conservative and New Labour governments, resulted in a shift from the *ad hoc pluralist* to the *quasi-corporatist* structuring of interest intermediation following in the mold of the Board of Deputies. The shift away from the *quasi-corporatist* organization of state-faith-based NGO relations with the deterioration of the relationship between New Labour and the MCB appears to have been motivated by processes of government learning that highlighted the MCB's limitations as a civil society partner in a post-7/7 context. It is argued here that these limitations were sublimated as long as the MCB continued to be an instrumentally useful partner. Again, it appears to have largely been issues of external politics—especially surrounding disagreements between the MCB and New Labour over British participation in the Global War on Terror as well as over the existence of a causal link between foreign policy and domestic violent extremism—that motivated the shift away from the government's existing *quasi-corporatist* arrangement with the MCB.

The subsequent shift toward a more pluralist—or *co-opted pluralist*—pattern appears to have been driven by a desire to locate more inclusive and/or 'liberal' alternatives to the MCB whose remit aligned more closely with a post-7/7 counter-extremism imperative. In order to achieve these ends, the state made political and financial support available to a plethora of faith-based NGOs who were seen as either more amenable to counter-extremism imperatives

(e.g. Quilliam Foundation) and/or were under-represented by the MCB (e.g. the Sufi-dominated SMC and BMF). This pattern of *co-opted pluralism* has largely continued under the Conservative-Liberal Democratic Coalition, albeit in a more localized, individualized, and far less monetized fashion. A lack of political will and shrinking budgets translates into a harsher environment for Muslim faith-based NGOs with a ‘representative’ claim, although this perceived distance from government may well serve to buttress the legitimacy and credibility of such organizations. The question then becomes one of whether under-resourced Muslim faith-based NGOs operating at the national level can sink or swim—or maintain any relevance—in a new environment that is short on both governmental access and funding under a government whose engagement agenda is explicitly ‘localist.’

Notes

¹ The designation ‘faith-based NGOs’ is used here to indicate non-governmental organizations that deploy a ‘Muslim’ identity category in order to make collective claims on behalf of British Muslims and/or engage in lobbying vis-à-vis the state. See Fiona B. Adamson, “Engaging or Contesting the Liberal State? ‘Muslim’ as a Politicized Identity Category in Europe.” in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 6 (July 2011): 899–915.

² Adapted from Philippe Schmitter, “Still the Century of Corporatism?” in *The Review of Politics* 36, no. 1 (January 1974): 85–131. In using this conceptual framework, it is important to note two caveats; first, “corporatism” and “pluralism,” as they are used here, are ideal types at either end of a conceptual dimension that are used here simply to measure variations in patterns of engagement over time. There is no suggestion that corporatist or pluralist patterns are themselves a cause or effect and no value judgment is made on the desirability or not of shifts toward more corporatist or more pluralist forms of intermediation. Second, it is necessary to note that, in reality, all state-society interactions include some mix of corporatist and pluralist structures and that the conceptual framework employed here is only intended to indicate broad trends along a continuum rather than shifts between an imaginary corporatist-pluralist dichotomy.

³ Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

⁴ Raphael Langham, *250 Years of Convention and Contention: A History of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760-2010*. (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010).

⁵ Board of Deputies of British Jews (BDBJ) Archival Reference C/13/5/3; BDBJ E/3/82; BDBJ C/13/3/7/29. The Board of Deputies archive is held at the London Metropolitan Archives.

⁶ See Raphael Langham, *250 Years of Convention and Contention: A History of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760-2010*. (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010) for a discussion of the Board of Deputies’ lobbying efforts vis-à-vis various Marriage Acts in the nineteenth century.

⁷ Board of Deputies of British Jews (BDBJ) Archival Reference C/16/34; BDBJ E/2/139; BDBJ E/3/55; BDBJ E/3/60. The Board of Deputies archive is held at the London Metropolitan Archives.

⁸ Michael Minkenberg, “The Policy Impact of Church-State Relations: Family Policy and Abortion in Britain, France, and Germany,” in *West European Politics*, 26, no. 1 (2003): 195–217.

⁸ Of course, an apparent *lack of correlation* does not necessarily imply that there is *no causation*.

¹⁰ Reactive sequences “are chains of temporally ordered and causally connected events.” See James Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology,” in *Theory and Society*, 29, no. 4 (2000): 507–48. For sources that specify a reactive sequence leading from the Satanic Verses Affair and the formation of the MCB, see Dilwar Hussain, “Muslim Political Participation in Britain and the ‘Europeanisation’ of Fiqh,” in *Die Welt Des Islams* 44, no. 3 (2004): 376–401 and Toby Archer, “Welcome to the Umma: The British State and Its Muslim Citizens Since 9/11,” in *Cooperation and Conflict* 44, no. 3 (September 2009): 329–47.

¹¹ See Shane Brighton, “British Muslims, Multiculturalism and UK Foreign Policy: ‘Integration’ and ‘Cohesion’ in and beyond the State,” in *International Affairs* 83, no. 1 (January 2007): 1–17; and Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma*, (London: Routledge, 2001):128.

¹² Steven Vertovec, “Islamophobia and Muslim Recognition in Britain,” in *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002):19–35, and Munira Mirza, Zein Ja’far Abi Senthilkumaran, and Policy Exchange (Firm), *Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the Paradox of Multiculturalism*. (London: Policy Exchange, 2007).

¹³ Personal interview with Mustafa Field MBE from the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) on February 21, 2014. See also Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800*. (London: Hurst and Co., 2004) and Max Farrar, ed. *Islam in the West: Key Issues in Multiculturalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁴ Schmitter “Still the Century of Corporatism?”

¹⁵ Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (London: Atlantic, 2010).

¹⁶ See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Tyler Golson, “Overhauling Islam: Representation, Construction, and Cooption of ‘Moderate Islam’ in Western Europe,” in *Journal of Church and State* 49, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 487–515; Jeevan Vasagar, “Dilemma of the Moderates.” *The Guardian*. June 19, 2002, sec. UK News. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/jun/19/september11.religion1>; and McLoughlin, Seán, “The State, New Muslim Leaderships and Islam as a Resource for Public Engagement in Britain,” in *European Muslims and the Secular State*, eds. Jocelyne Cesari and Sean McLoughlin. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005)

¹⁷ Personal interview with Yousif Al-Khoei of the al-Khoei Foundation on June 6, 2014.

¹⁸ Toby Greene, *Blair, Labour, and Palestine: Conflicting Views on Middle East Peace After 9/11*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013). David Miliband, as Foreign Secretary under Gordon Brown, moved toward a tacit recognition of the link between foreign policy and radicalization. See David Miliband, “New Diplomacy: Challenges for Foreign Policy,” Speech presented at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, July 19, 2007.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1557892/Full-text-of-Foreign-Secretarys-policy-speech.html>.

¹⁹ Personal interviews with Dr. Anas al-Tikriti of the Cordoba Foundation on February 18, 2014, and Mustafa Field MBE of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) on February 21, 2014.

²⁰ Tahir Abbas characterizes this as, “the beginning of the end for MCB’s cozy relationship with No. 10.” The idea of the MCB’s opposition to the Afghan bombing campaign as a critical juncture was shared by a number of interviewees from across ideological and sectarian divides. See *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, ed. Tahir Abbas (London New York: Zed Books, 2005). For more about the ‘selling’ of coalition attacks on Afghanistan, see Jonathan Birt, “Lobbying and Marching: British Muslims and the State.” in *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, ed. Tahir Abbas (London New York: Zed Books, 2005)

²¹ Again, there is some variation between interviewees as to the characterization of this meeting with, for example, one interviewee characterizing the meeting as an attempt by Blair to “measure the degree of support or opposition” of Muslim community leaders with another characterizing it as a more forceful “demand for support.”

²² Personal interview with Dr. Anas al-Tikriti of the Cordoba Foundation on February 18, 2014.

²³ Jonathan Birt, “Lobbying and Marching: British Muslims and the State.” in *Muslim Britain: Communities under Pressure*, ed. Tahir Abbas (London New York: Zed Books, 2005)

²⁴ Personal interview with Mustafa Field MBE of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board on February 21, 2014.

²⁵ Personal interview with Tehmina Kazi of British Muslims for Secular Democracy on May 22, 2014.

²⁶ In 2009, the response of former British Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, in attempting to force the resignation of Daud Abdullah, Deputy Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, was indicative of an unprecedented level of government interference in the operation of a supposedly independent and non-governmental body. Such maneuvering can be seen as an attempt to impose controls on the selection of leaders of a civil society organization—a hallmark of more corporatist patterns of interest intermediation. However, it has also been suggested that the Daud Abdullah affair simply provided New Labour with a convenient excuse to make a definitive public break with the MCB.

²⁷ Personal interview with Mustafa Field MBE of MINAB on February 21, 2014.

²⁸ Personal interview with Dr. Usama Hasan of the Quilliam Foundation on February 19, 2014.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See, Pankhurst, Reza. 2015. “Woolwich, ‘Islamism’ and the ‘Conveyor Belt to Terrorism’ Theory | Hurst Publishers.” *HURST*. Accessed March 30. <http://www.hurstpublishers.com/woolwich-islamism-and-the-conveyor-belt-to-terrorism-theory/>.

³² The Shia representation in MINAB was a collaborative effort between the al-Khoei Foundation, the World Federation of Khoja Shia and the Pakistani Shia community.

³³ Birt, Yahya. "Governing Muslims after 9/11." In *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, edited by S. Sayyid and A.K. Vakil, 117–28. (London: Hurst, 2008).

³⁴ For a much more detailed discussion of continuity and change in faith engagement between New Labour and the Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition, see Therese O'Toole, "Faith and the Coalition: A New Confidence to 'Do God'?" in *Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance Working Paper*, No. 3.

³⁵ Interviews with Tehmina Kazi of British Muslims for Secular Democracy and Dr. Usama Hasan of the Quilliam Foundation.

³⁶ Brighton, "British Muslims, Multiculturalism and UK Foreign Policy" and Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics*.

Islamophobia on the Move: Circulation of Anti-Muslim Prejudice between Poland and the UK

ANNA GAWLEWICZ & KASIA NARKOWICZ

Abstract

As Muslims have become a target group for religious and racist prejudice both in the UK and in other parts of Europe in recent years, so studies of anti-Muslim attitudes have increased. Yet part of Europe is often omitted in academic discussions on Islamophobia, that is Central and Eastern Europe with its long and rich Islamic history. In response this paper explores negative attitudes towards Muslims in Poland and among Polish migrants to the UK. It simultaneously focuses on Poland and the UK and on the spaces between both societies where circulation of ideas takes place. As such, it maps the transnational mobility of anti-Muslim prejudice and draws attention to the complex ways in which attitudes towards Muslim people are shaped and reproduced through international mobility. The paper firstly shows that upon migrating to the UK many Poles have increased contact with Muslim people and find themselves in the midst of already-established attitudes towards Muslim groups. The consequence of this is development, revision or change of attitudes towards Muslims. Secondly, the paper demonstrates that the newly developed or acquired (and frequently prejudice-loaded) discourses are likely to travel back to Poland together with migrant stories. This has the potential to strengthen negative attitudes towards Islam among people in Poland. The paper draws upon findings from two separate PhD projects employing qualitative methodologies to study migrant attitudes towards difference and religious tensions in Poland respectively.

Societies have recently noted accelerated and diversified migration due to globalisation processes.¹ Within Europe, there was a dramatic rise in mobility, particularly between Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Western Europe, after the 2004 eastern expansion of the European Union (EU).² The biggest migration flow is observed between Poland and the UK.³ According to the 2011 Census data over half a million Polish people live in the UK.⁴ Simultaneously in the last decade, and particularly following the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, Europe witnessed an escalation in prejudiced attitudes towards Islam and Muslims.⁵ Countries such as Poland, which for centuries evidenced a peaceful coexistence with Islam, demonstrated a worrying escalation of anti-Muslim prejudice.⁶ By looking into both the increased East-West migration in Europe and the rise of Islamophobia, we aim to explore

the mobile nature of anti-Muslim prejudice. In our conceptualisation of Islamophobia we are inspired by Chris Allen who defined this attitude as “an ideology... that sustains and perpetuates negatively evaluated meaning about Muslims and Islam... shaping and determining understanding, perceptions and attitudes... that inform and construct thinking about Muslims and Islam as Other.”⁷

Apart from personal belongings or what have been termed ‘physical containers’ of home,⁸ what may assist migrants on their journeys between sending and receiving societies is how they understand the social world as well as their beliefs, values, attitudes, routines or prejudices.⁹ Conversely, what they ‘pick up’ in the context of the host society and internalise whilst forging transnational identities,¹⁰ may be further communicated to their significant others who live in their home country.¹¹ In this paper, we explore how prejudiced attitudes towards Muslim people travel with migrants from Poland to the UK and back. In this regard, our paper focuses simultaneously on Poland and the UK, and on the spaces between both societies where circulation of ideas takes place. We argue that upon migration to the UK many Poles have increased contact with Muslim people and find themselves in the midst of already-established attitudes towards Muslim groups, in some cases leading to an adoption of Islamophobic attitudes among migrants. We provide evidence that some participants in our study were less prejudiced towards Muslims prior to migration to Britain. As we demonstrate the circulation of Islamophobic attitudes between Poland and the UK, we draw attention to the newly acquired (often prejudice-loaded) discourses that travel back to Poland together with migrant stories. This, we argue, has the potential to strengthen negative attitudes towards Islam among the migrants’ significant others in Poland. In particular, we intend to shed some light on how Islamophobia travels between national contexts and unwrap its transnational character by focusing on how it is spelled out in Poland and among Polish migrants to the UK.

We begin the paper by situating our study and briefly reflecting on the methodologies we utilised. Next, we explore anti-Muslim prejudices in the Polish context. Then, we focus on Polish UK-based migrants in order to explore how attitudes towards Muslim people are shaped and reproduced through international mobility. Finally, we investigate the circulation of prejudice towards Muslim people between Polish migrants in the UK and their significant others (i.e. close relatives and/or friends) in Poland. In joining

our findings we intend to present complex ways in which prejudice against Muslims travels across national borders.

Situating the Study

As Muslims have increasingly become a target group for religious and racist prejudice both in the UK and in other parts of Europe in recent years, so studies focusing on Islamophobia have increased.¹² The focus has almost entirely been directed at Western Europe, home to large numbers of Muslim migrants. Often placed outside of the geographical imagination of the European borders, CEE has been largely omitted within the core academic conversation on rising anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe. With the example of Poland, a few notable contributions have moved towards closing that gap¹³ and this is where our contribution is situated. As such, this paper is a step towards putting Poland and the vital presence of Polish migrants in Britain on the map of studies that focus on anti-Muslim prejudice and initiatives aimed at countering the growing presence of Islamophobia in Europe.

Studies on migration, transnationalism and long-distance kinship and friendship relations, while particularly insightful in terms of how people's lives, identities and relationships are transformed through international mobility, have so far rarely explored the circulation of prejudice between home and host societies. Against this backdrop, we offer a significant input into an emerging debate on mobility of values and attitudes.

This paper is based on findings from two separate PhD projects that are part of the ERC-funded research programme LiveDifference,¹⁴ running 2010-2014. Our studies explored migrant attitudes towards difference and religious tensions in Poland respectively. Both projects employed qualitative methods, including individual interviews, focus groups, audio-diaries, participant observation and media discourse analysis. Migrant attitudes towards Muslim people were explored in the context of the northern English city of Leeds, as home to a significant Pakistani and British-Pakistani community.¹⁵ Here, interviewees included both migrants themselves and their significant others resident in Poland. Islamophobic attitudes in Poland were investigated with regard to the tension between Muslims, Catholics and secularists, negotiating the construction of the first purpose-built mosque in a neighbourhood in Warsaw,¹⁶ the capital of Poland.

In the paper, we draw particularly on data collected during one-to-one interviews. The quotations we include come from translated transcriptions of the interviews. Three ellipsis dots in brackets are used to indicate that a small section of text has been removed to facilitate readability. All names are pseudonyms to ensure participants' anonymity.

Islamophobic Attitudes in Poland

Polish people usually have little contact with Muslims, who make up less than 1% of the entire population.¹⁷ Against this backdrop, anti-Muslim attitudes in the Polish context have been referred to as “Islamophobia without Muslims”.¹⁸ While the claim that some CEE countries are ethnically, nationally and religiously homogenous is to a certain degree accurate,¹⁹ the rich Islamic history of the region is often ignored. Historically, Poland used to be a diverse country with an indigenous Muslim population, the Tatars, living in the Polish territories since the 14th century.²⁰ Some participants in our study had Tatars in their families and many had come across mosques that, while rare today, have been part of the architectural make-up of Polish society since the 16th century.²¹ Most of the Tatars are Muslims of the Hanafi school. Coming from the Golden Horde area, they started settling in the Polish territories in the mid-14th century. Yet the biggest migration to Poland took place later in the 16th and 17th centuries. Muslim minorities had religious freedom to practice Islam and the right to build mosques. The number of Tatars on Polish territories decreased significantly in the late 18th century when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist and most of the Tatars found themselves on the other side of the Polish borderlands.

Furthermore, Arab students who started migrating to Poland during the communist era are today a well-integrated and crucial part of the small yet thriving Muslim community. Their own Muslim organisation,²² the Muslim League, was founded in 2001 and is one of two official Muslim organisations in Poland, together with the Tatar-founded and dominated Muslim Religious Organisation. The two Muslim groups attract Arab migrants to Poland, international Muslim students, Polish converts and Tatars.

Our data suggests that until the late 1990s neither the Tatars nor Arab Muslim immigrants to Poland experienced notable prejudice. Prejudice against Muslims in Poland has escalated recently in response to global events such as 9/11 and 7/7.²³ Fuelled by negative media coverage, the perception of Islam

changed within, but also outside of, Western Europe.²⁴ As the following narrative from an imam in Warsaw illustrates, the previous religious tolerance in Poland has slowly been eroded ever since the 2001 attacks:

Tatars tell me today how their forefathers were living calmly. They said that on Friday everyone met at the imam's house, on Saturday they all met at the rabbi's house and on Sunday they met at the priest's house. This religious tolerance was very strong. [...] And then it changed into Islam being a religion of terrorism. I think it was after the attacks in America, the war in Iraq, it started then. People say it is a terrorist religion, that it gives no freedom to women. What is now being said in Poland, was before said in the West.

(Imam, Warsaw Mosque, in his 40s)

The imam argued that the way Muslims are perceived in present-day Poland has undergone a change from religious coexistence to a view of Islam as a “terrorist religion”. The Muslim ‘other’ of today fits the post-2001 media-infused stereotype.²⁵ Such an image is not consistent with the representation of the Muslim Tatar community.²⁶ Participants in our studies generally demonstrated positive attitudes towards the Tatars. Moreover, they contrasted to and separated the Tatars from the current media representations of the threat posed by Muslims:

Up until now the Warsaw Muslims were for Poles associated with the Tatars, who fought in the war in the 1920s, later they were officers of the Polish army in 1939, they were always on our side, they were fighting and they were a part of the society, a part of Poland. They were very integrated and in no way were they a threat. From 2001 things changed, from 11th of September, the vision of what a Muslim is changed, it is obvious now, a Muslim is what most people associate with a terrorist, right, and therefore people are afraid of this kind of cohabiting.

(Jarosław, resident of Warsaw, in his 30s)

Jarosław experienced a divide between the image of Muslims and Islam prior to 9/11 and after the events. This quote exemplifies a larger sentiment across our studies of a rising Islamophobia in Poland. This is related to a recent radicalisation of anti-Muslim attitudes in the country observed in our studies.²⁷

Migration and Anti-Muslim Sentiments

While historically diverse and a home for such minority populations as Muslim Tatars, contemporary Polish society remains nonetheless relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion (predominantly Roman Catholic).²⁸ This is a consequence of the Second World War as well as the communist regime which lasted until 1989.²⁹ In this context, it has been

argued that for many Polish migrants in heterogeneous societies such as the UK, the act of migration is followed by their first personal encounter with increased cultural diversity.³⁰

The findings of our research into migrant encounters with diversity are rather complex, reflecting the intricacies of social relations and intercultural understanding. The majority of migrant respondents unanimously claim that they have an increased contact with Muslim people post-migration. In doing so, they express a range of attitudes towards Muslims, from positive to negative. While how and why such attitudes are forged is beyond the scope of this paper,³¹ it is important to draw attention to the instances of our participants describing a profound shift in their perception of Muslims as a result of migration to British society. This is reflected well in the quote below.

When I worked as a waiter [in Poland], the owner of the place was an Arab person from Morocco. So, there I could see they [Muslims] are slightly different. They have a different culture and different approach to various things. [...] But, it wasn't something that had any influence on me. This sort of, I don't know, hatred or sense of difference towards them – I developed it here [in the UK], during all these years I've been living here. [...] There are many things [about Islam] which just cannot be accepted rationally. Treatment of women. A woman is just an element – she is not a family member. How come in 21st century, the age of freedom of speech, the age of democracy things like this happen?

(Piotr, migrant, in his 40s)

Piotr belongs to a small group of migrant participants who had contact with Muslim people both in the Polish and the British context. Importantly, migration between these countries challenged his 'neutral' attitude and, as he says, it was in the UK that he developed a "hatred or sense of difference" towards Muslims. Piotr's case exemplifies the situation in which prejudice towards Muslim people is developed in the context of migration between two distinctive societies. However, as such, it should not imply that most migrants become prejudiced because of migration (or migration to certain places). The broader findings of our research into Polish migrants' encounters with difference in the UK context suggest that alongside unfavourable attitudes, migrants are also likely to develop a range of favourable stances towards Muslims including a sense of familiarity or solidarity.

Transnational Transmission of Islamophobia

One of the main findings of our research with Polish migrants is that many of them discussed their attitudes (both positive and negative) with their

significant others in Poland. This matters crucially because prejudiced views, including Islamophobia, are very likely to be passed on between family members or peers.³² This is illustrated in the narrative below in which a sister of a Polish migrant describes what she has ‘learnt’ about Muslims from her brother.

Marek says they [Pakistani Muslims] are so religious in their countries, but when they arrive to England they behave much worse. [...] That women actually do have tough lives but men... they go to a mosque, they pray and then they go crazy during the night – they have parties and so on because Allah doesn't see during the night. [...] He said the woman is not respected much. [...] That the women have to sit at home and they can only meet with other women. Anyway, he stressed that women are oppressed – not in a physical sense, but they are just a lower kind of persons. That man is a guru, right?

(Aga, sister of migrant Marek, in her 30s)

This case exemplifies a wider prevalence in our findings of circulation of Islamophobia across borders. In the example above, Aga had taken over and internalised her brother's prejudiced views despite the fact that she had no contact with any Muslim people in her environment in Poland. Here, her brother became a transnational agent who transmitted anti-Muslim prejudice across national borders.

Importantly, our findings suggest that in addition to unfavourable attitudes, prejudiced language, discourses, practices and behaviour are also particularly likely to circulate between migrants and significant others in their societies of origin. In doing so, these forms of ‘othering’ and stigma are prone to contribute to the proliferation of prejudice across national borders and cultural settings. It is crucial to stress, however, that not only prejudiced attitudes were passed between the participants in our study. Some migrants were married to or maintained relationships/friendships with Muslim people they met in the UK. These participants frequently transmitted positive feelings towards Muslims and Islam to their relatives or friends in Poland.

Conclusion

We have provided evidence that Islamophobia, a negative attitude towards Muslim people, is indeed a mobile construction, likely to travel between geographical locations. In particular, we have looked into two distinctive national settings, Poland and the UK. We have shown how positive attitudes towards Muslims in Poland, home to a small yet diverse and settled Muslim

population, have transformed over the last decade. We have also argued that prejudices such as Islamophobia may not only assist migrants on their journey from home to host society, but also develop post-migration despite the previous 'neutral' or even positive contact with Muslims. Importantly, given that migrants develop transnational ties and long-distance relationships, we have demonstrated that it may be passed on between significant others who live in different national settings.

Fostered for centuries, the positive attitudes towards Muslims in Poland have undergone a change with a recent growth of anti-Muslim attitudes in the country. We argue that Islamophobia is *on the move* not only as migrants travel between societies, but also when they communicate anti-Muslim attitudes to their relatives and friends in sending societies. As such, Islamophobia circulates between geographical locations, societies and people. Mobility of Islamophobia is particularly significant to policy makers, as it suggests that anti-Muslim prejudice may proliferate through the agency of migrants.

Notes

¹ Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009).

² In 2004 eight Central and Eastern European states entered the EU. These were: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. See e.g. Kathy Burrell, ed., *Polish migration to the UK in the 'new' European Union: after 2004* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Torben Krings, Elaine Moriarty, James Wickham, Alicja Bobek and Justyna Salomońska, *New mobilities in Europe: Polish migration to Ireland post-2004* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013).

³ Richard Black, Godfried Engbersen, Marek Okólski and Cristina Pantiru, eds., *A Continent Moving West?: EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

⁴ Office for National Statistics, "Polish People in the UK - Half a million Polish Residents," 2011, <http://www.ons.gov.uk> (accessed 10 Jan 2013)

⁵ Chris Allen, "Passing the Dinner Table Test," *SAGE Open*, 3, 2 (2013); Lorraine Sheridan, "Islamophobia Pre- and Post-September 11th, 2001," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 21, 3 (2006): 317-336.

⁶ Konrad Pędziwiatr, "Muslims in the Polish Media - the New Folk Devil?," *Arches Quarterly* 4, 7 (2010): 89-95.

⁷ Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), 190.

⁸ David Morley, *Home territories: media, mobility and identity* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁹ See e.g. Floya Anthias, "Diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity?," *Sociology*, 32, 3 (1998): 557-580; Jennifer Brown, "Expressions of diasporic belonging: The divergent emotional geographies of Britain's Polish communities," *Emotion, Space and Society*, 4,4 (2011): 229-237; Patricia Ehrkamp, "Placing identities: Transnational practices and local attachments of Turkish immigrants in Germany," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31, 2 (2005): 345-364; Lynn Staeheli and Caroline Nagel, "Topographies of home and citizenship: Arab-American activists in the United States," *Environment and Planning A*, 38, 9 (2006): 1599-1614.

¹⁰ Ayse S. Çağlar, "Hyphenated Identities and the Limits of 'Culture'", in *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community*, eds. Tariq Modood and Prina Werbner (London: Zed-Books, 1997); Ayse S. Çağlar, "Constraining metaphors and the transnationalisation of spaces in Berlin," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27, 4 (2001): 601-613; Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "Towards a definition of transnationalism: introductory remarks and research questions," in *Toward a Transnational Perspective on Migration*, eds. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (New York Academy of Sciences, 1992), ix – xiv; Vertovec, *Transnationalism*.

¹¹ Peggy Levitt, "Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion," *International Migration Review*, 32, 4 (1998): 926-948; Peggy Levitt and Deepak Lamba-Nieves, "Social Remittances Revisited," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37, 1 (2011): 1-22.

¹² Allen, *Islamophobia*; John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin, eds. *Islamophobia: the Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jocelyne Cesari, "Islamophobia in the West: A comparison between Europe and the United States," in *Islamophobia: The Challenge of pluralism*, 21-45; Nasar Meer, "Racialization and religion: race, culture and difference in the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36, 3 (2013): 385-398; Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, "For 'Jewish' read 'Muslim'? Islamophobia as a form of racialisation of ethno-religious groups in Britain today," *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 1, 1 (2012): 36-55; Richard Phillips, *Muslim Spaces of Hope: geographies of possibility in Britain and the West* (London: Zed Books, 2009); Salman Sayyid and Abdool Karim Vakil, eds. *Thinking through Islamophobia: global perspectives* (London: Hurst and Company, 2010); Anna Triandafyllidou and Ruby Gropas, "Constructing difference: The mosque debates in Greece," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, 6 (2009): 957-975.

¹³ Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, "From Polish Muslims to Muslims in Poland: There and Back," in *Perceptions of Islam in Europe: Culture, Identity and the Muslim 'Other'*, eds. Hakan Yılmaz and Çağla Aykaç (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 107-124; Agata S. Nalborczyk, "Mosques in Poland. Past and present," in *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam*, ed. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska (Warszawa: University of Warsaw, 2011), 183-193; Konrad P dziwiatr, "'The Established and Newcomers' in Islam in Poland or the intergroup relations within the Polish Muslim community," in *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe*, 169-182; Renata Włoch, "Islam in Poland," *International Journal of Sociology* 39, 3 (2009): 58-67.

¹⁴ Living with Difference in Europe: Making communities out of strangers in an era of super mobility and super diversity. LiveDifference is a research programme involving five inter linked

projects which explore the extent and nature of everyday encounters with 'difference', by each collecting original data in the UK (a post colonial European state) and Poland (a post-communist European state).

¹⁵ John Stillwell and Deborah Phillips, "Diversity and Change: Understanding the Ethnic Geographies of Leeds," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32, 7 (2006): 1131-1152.

¹⁶ Nalborczyk, "Mosques in Poland".

¹⁷ Marek M. Dziekan, "History and culture of Polish Tatars," in *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam*, ed. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, (Warszawa: University of Warsaw, 2011), 27-39.

¹⁸ Włoch, "Islam in Poland".

¹⁹ Krzysztof Podemski, "Do wiadczenie wiata. Kontakty mi dzykulturowe Polaków [Experiencing the world. Intercultural encounters of Polish people]," in eds. Krzysztof Frysztacki and Piotr Sztompka, *Polska pocz tku XXI wieku: przemiany kulturowe i cywilizacyjne [Cultural and civilisational changes in early XXI-century Poland]* (Warszawa: Wyd. Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012), 197-221.

²⁰ Agata S. Nalborczyk and Paweł Borecki, "Relations between Islam and the state in Poland: the legal position of Polish Muslims," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, 3 (2011): 343-359.

²¹ Nalborczyk, "Mosques in Poland".

²² Górak-Sosnowska, ed. *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam* (Warszawa: University of Warsaw, 2011).

²³ Chris Allen, "Justifying Islamophobia: a post-9/11 consideration of the European Union and British contexts," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, 3 (2004): 1-25.

²⁴ Górak-Sosnowska, ed. *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe*.

²⁵ Eugeniusz Sakowicz, "Dialogue between the Catholic Church and Islam in Poland" in *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe*, 194-206.

²⁶ P dziwiatr, "Muslims in the Polish Media".

²⁷ See also Ibid.; Górak-Sosnowska ed. *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe*; Włoch, "Islam in Poland".

²⁸ Podemski, "Do wiadczenie wiata",

²⁹ Agnieszka Borowik and Piotr Szarota, eds., *Tolerancja i wielokulturowość. Wyzwania XXI wieku [Tolerance and multiculturalism. The challenges of the 21st century]* (Warszawa: Academica, 2004).

³⁰ Bill Jordan, 'Foreword' in *Contemporary Polish migration in Europe: complex patterns of movement and settlement*, ed. Anna Triandafyllidou (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

³¹ More insights into formation of prejudice towards difference can be found in Gill Valentine, "Prejudice: rethinking geographies of oppression," *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11,6 (2010),: 519-537.

³² See e.g. Frances E. Aboud and Anna-Beth Doyle, "Parental and peer influences on children's racial attitudes," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 20, 3-4 (1996): 371-383; Luigi Castelli, Cristina Zogmaister and Silvia Tomelleri, "The transmission of racial attitudes within the family," *Developmental Psychology*, 45, 2 (2009): 586-591; Megan O'Bryan, Harold Fishbein and

P. Neal Ritchey, "Intergenerational Transmission of Prejudice, Sex Role Stereotyping, and Intolerance," *Adolescence*, 39, 155 (2004): 407-426.

British Muslim Communities and ‘Everyday’ Hate Crime

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Abstract

The analysis of large scale crime data reveals that hate crime and discrimination targeted towards British Muslim communities are shaped not by acts of physical violence, as is often claimed in scholarly criminological literature, but by frequently occurring incidents of ‘everyday’ hate crime. Such crime is capable of manifesting in acts such as verbal abuse and non-criminal forms of discrimination in public places yet infrequently discussed by scholars. ‘Everyday’ hate crime incidents are seldom perceived by their (mainly female) victims as criminal in nature, rarely reported to the police or local authority, and thus routinely evade official recording procedures. Subsequently, criminological and sociological knowledge in this area is demonstrably, although perhaps understandably skewed towards less mundane, less ‘everyday’ forms of violence. This paper presents an exploration of recent literature in concert with analysis of data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales 2006 to 2010 and argues for a more sophisticated, nuanced approach to the collection, analysis and reporting of crime data. The author posits an urgent need for a renewed focus by scholars and practitioners on non-physical acts of discrimination and for an increased consideration of the under-reported ‘everyday’ hate crime suffered by many British Muslim communities.

Introduction

This paper summarises emergent findings from a doctoral research project examining Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in the UK. The project’s primary objective is to assess the extent to which assertions and conclusions from the scholarly criminological literature concerning the concept of Islamophobia are supported or challenged by available statistics. This paper focuses more specifically on the conceptualisation of anti-Muslim discrimination in the UK within the scholarly literature and argues that there is a need for criminologists and other social scientists to broaden their focus and consider more frequently incidents involving non-physical forms of discrimination and harassment in public places (here described as ‘everyday’ hate crime). Recent scholarly criminological literature concerning British Muslim communities, crime and the criminal justice system is first examined. Findings from statistical analyses of the British Election Study, the Citizenship Survey and the Crime Survey of England and Wales are then employed to test the assertions and conclusions found within this literature. It will be

demonstrated that, while there is little evidence to support assertions concerning the increased risks of physical violent crime faced by British Muslim communities, there is evidence to show the need for further research related to anti-Muslim discrimination in 'everyday' public spaces (such as on the street, whilst near schools or whilst in doctors' surgeries).

An examination of the scholarly criminological literature concerning British Muslim communities, crime and the criminal justice system reveals it to be dominated by several key themes (some of which are beyond the scope of this discussion). There is a large and still-growing body of literature describing disproportionate state interference by state bodies such as the police¹ and which often centres, as might be expected, on issues of national security and counter-terrorism.² There is a large body of literature around the concept of Islamophobia: described as a unique and widespread phenomenon affecting British Muslim communities.³ Although still an ill-defined and contested term⁴ the concept of Islamophobia is capable of being used to describe negative media portrayals of British Muslims⁵ and Muslim crime victimisation;⁶ sometimes the two are described as being related causally.⁷ Whilst crime victimisation among Muslim communities may orient around either personal crime or property damage,⁸ the main focus for criminologists is on violent crimes against the person motivated by some form of bigotry.⁹ Scholarly literature has continued to identify and emphasise the risks and harms caused by targeted physical abuse against British Muslim communities; communities described as disproportionately affected by these hate crimes.¹⁰ Violent, physical and abusive crimes inform a typology identified as the most relevant to the criminological study of British Muslim communities.¹¹ Scholarly literature asserts or implies the higher risks of physical attack¹² and the 'greater cumulative threat' of street violence.¹³

Statistical Findings

The Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) surveys 40,000 respondents per year from households selected by a multi-stage stratified random sample procedure using the Postcode Address File and representative of the population of households in England and Wales. Respondents report and describe crime incidents suffered over the previous twelve months. The analysis reported here used merged response data from 2006 to 2011. The process of merging data created a dataset adequate for generalisations concerning the Muslim population of England and Wales (n=188,625).

Within this dataset 5,000 respondents described themselves as Muslim (n=4,841).

The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between Muslim and non-Muslim respondents in respect of a series of personal offences: violence, wounding (serious or otherwise), assault (both common and attempted), threats and robbery (i.e. the types of personal crime described in the literature as being the ones to which British Muslim communities are particularly susceptible). Muslim and non-Muslim respondents shared a broadly similar likelihood of reporting common assault (1.8% and 2.1% respectively, $p > 0.01$) and a similar likelihood of reporting an offence containing an element of violence (3.3% and 3.4% respectively, $p > 0.05$). Muslim respondents were no more likely than non-Muslim respondents to report having been threatened (2.5% and 2.3% respectively, $p > 0.05$), and no more likely to report having been the victim of robbery (0.8% and 0.5% respectively, $p > 0.05$); or the victim of wounding (0.6% and 0.8% respectively, $p > 0.05$). Only one such statistically significant difference was revealed by the analysis: Muslim respondents were more likely than non-Muslim respondents to report being the victim of mugging (1.1% and 0.7% respectively, $p < 0.05$). However, the analysis revealed no such statistically significant differences between Muslim respondents and respondents from each of the Hindu, Jewish and Sikh groups (1.3%, 1.7%, 1.1%, 1% respectively, $p > 0.05$). Respondents from the minority religion groups appeared to share a broadly similar likelihood of reporting being mugged. CSEW data suggest many broad similarities between Muslim respondents and respondents from each of the other minority religion groups in respect of personal crime victimisation. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh respondents shared a broadly similar likelihood of reporting being the victim of violent crime, wounding, robbery, theft, and threats. Jewish respondents were more likely than Muslim respondents to report all violent crime (5.3% and 3.3% respectively, $p < 0.05$). These comparisons contrast sharply with descriptions in the scholarly literature. Evidence from the CSEW appears to undermine arguments which assert that British Muslim communities are, among other minority religion groups, disproportionately challenged by such offences. It is not possible to identify a personal offence within the CSEW for which Muslim respondents are, solely, the most likely to report victimisation. Rather, victimisation by personal violent crime among Muslim respondents seems to reflect the experiences of many other non-Muslim respondents; Muslim respondents reported broadly

similarly rates of personal crime victimisation as Hindu, Jewish and Sikh respondents.

The Ethnic Minority British Election Study 2010 (EMBES) surveyed 3,000 respondents (n=2,787) using of a multi-stage stratified random sample, the Postcode Address File, and the self-classification of respondents into Census minority groups. 1,000 respondents self-classified as Muslim (n=1,092). EMBES data was used to analyse the nature and extent of discrimination suffered by British Muslim communities. Analysis revealed that Muslim and Hindu respondents shared a similar likelihood of reporting discrimination (27.9% and 26.2% respectively, $p>0.05$) but a lesser likelihood than Christian and Sikh respondents (27.9%, 44.5% and 37.7% respectively, $p<0.05$). However, Muslim respondents who reported discrimination were far more likely than Christian, Hindu and Sikh respondents to perceive their discrimination as having been because of their religion (49.3%, 9%, 5.1%, 16.5% respectively, $p<0.01$). Interestingly perhaps, 'Your religion' was a less popular response among Muslim respondents than 'Your ethnicity, race or skin colour' (chosen by 69.6% of Muslim respondents). (This perhaps demonstrates the dangers inherent within conceptualising anti-Muslim hate crime in terms of religion alone.)

Respondents were invited to describe the situations where reported discrimination occurred. The findings suggest a need to broaden the conceptualisation of anti-Muslim discrimination to include greater focus on 'everyday' hate crime. A majority of Muslim respondents who reported discrimination experienced incidents 'On the street': a response chosen by a majority of Muslim respondents (56.2%); more than Christian, Hindu and Sikh respondents (38.5%, 38% and 45.6% respectively). Differences between Muslim respondents and respondents from the Christian and Hindu groups were statistically significant ($p<0.05$). 'On the street' was a far more popular response option for Muslim respondents than 'Police or courts' (14.4%) and 'Government officials' (14.3%). Differences between religion groups were informed by differences between male and female Muslim respondents. Whilst there were no differences between groups of male respondents aggregated by religion and experiencing discrimination on the street ($\chi^2=1.1441$, $df=4$, $p>0.01$), there were statistically differences between female respondents aggregated by religion ($\chi^2=36.271$, $df=4$, $p<0.001$). Whilst female Christian, Hindu and Sikh victims of discrimination shared a broadly similar likelihood of reporting incidents on the street (29.5%, 29.3% and 34.1%

respectively), female Muslim victims were twice as likely to experience such discrimination (62.2%, $p < 0.001$).

Findings from the Citizenship Survey (CS) provide further support for an increased consideration of 'everyday' hate crime against Muslim communities. The survey used a multi-stage stratified random sample and the Postcode Address File to survey 45,000 respondents between 2007 and 2010 ($n=45,146$); 7,000 of whom self-classified as Muslim ($n=7,721$). Analysis revealed that Muslim respondents were no more likely than Hindu and Sikh respondents to suffer harassment due to 'Skin colour, ethnic origin, or religion' (15%, 13.6% and 15.4% respectively, $p > 0.05$). All respondents were asked to describe experiences and scenarios in which they had suffered religious discrimination. The most popular response option was discrimination by the police (reported by 6.3% of all Muslim respondents). However, other popular responses all relate to 'everyday' hate crime (and together represent a greater number of incidents than police discrimination alone). Muslim respondents reported discrimination in public spaces: at a local hospital (3.1%); at a local school (2.6%); and at a local doctor's surgery (2.5%). Analysis revealed Muslim respondents were more likely than Hindu and Sikh respondents to report such discrimination in these spaces (in all comparisons, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion

Criminological discourse around British Muslim communities, crime and the criminal justice system seems largely to neglect instances of 'everyday' hate crime. Instead, the literature focuses primarily on the relationship between British Muslim communities and the police, the subject of national security and counter-terrorism and the concept of Islamophobia. The conceptualisation of Islamophobia orients around descriptions of crime victimisation which frequently assert the prevalence of personal crime and direct physical violence. Less frequent descriptions of non-physical discrimination (such as verbal abuse) are to be found in the literature¹⁴ although rarely is the problem quantified adequately. Rather, characteristics of the research around anti-Muslim discrimination appear to reflect those found elsewhere in research around British Muslim communities, crime and the criminal justice system. Rarely do scholars and commentators adduce empirical evidence in support of assertions and conclusions. Whilst it would be an exaggeration to describe discourse around British Muslim communities as being wholly devoid of

empirical evidence,¹⁵ research is dominated by the use of rather limited research designs. Many scholars and commentators rely on anecdotal evidence, or data collected from sample sizes too small to be nationally-representative, or else make contributions to the literature which rely on political and polemical discourse that is often highly rhetorical in nature. Often, findings generated by qualitative research methods are used to describe the nature of violence and discrimination (a wholly appropriate usage of such methods) but also the extent of such phenomena (where such methods are far less useful).¹⁶ As stated, not all research reflects such methodological shortcomings. Sheridan's research of over 200 Muslim respondents measures Islamophobia pre- and post-September 11, 2001 and revealed an increase in incidents such as 'Being ignored, overlooked, or not given service in a shop, restaurant, etc.' and 'Being closely observed or followed in public places'.¹⁷ The current research project contributes towards the further criminological understanding of these 'everyday' occurrences using larger sample sizes and a research design which employs a wider time-frame. (Data for the current project are drawn from surveys undertaken between 2006 and 2011).

A recent publicly-funded project aimed to support victims of anti-Muslim hate crime and provide the means by which statistical evidence could be gathered and used to aide research around the subject (i.e. the type of available data called for by this paper). Known as 'Tell MAMA' (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) the project was established in 2012 by the inter-faith organisation, Faith Matters, as a reporting service for victims of anti-Muslim hate crime.¹⁸ Although the Home Office removed funding in 2013,¹⁹ the project has been heralded a success and the captured data presented as robust empirical evidence as to the nature and (increased) extent of anti-Muslim hate crime in the UK.²⁰ Further, findings seem to support assertions concerning the under-reporting of hate crimes by Muslim victims (Tell MAMA was established specifically to encourage the reporting of such incidents). However, data related to online expressions of anti-Muslim sentiment (74% of all incidents reported to Tell MAMA²¹) reveal the overall limitations inherent within the collection and analysis of data by the project. It is difficult to ascertain whether the online incidents described by Tell MAMA, and in the recent reports cited above, involved words used to target directly individual victims or whether, instead, were comments made more generally about all Muslims and Islam. Any words expressing anti-Muslim sentiment are capable of causing harm and distress to anyone encountering

them, regardless of whether used directly or indirectly (and regardless of whether or not the reader is part of an intended readership). However, the presenting of data related to online comments, especially within the context of victim support, raises questions about the appropriateness of the label 'incident' (especially if such comments are found following a pre-meditated search). Further, such findings do not represent generalisable data concerning hate crime directed at British Muslims (especially if the source of the comments is outside the UK or unknown). Such data do not provide compelling evidence for arguments which seek to assert the extent of anti-Muslim hate crime in the UK. Indeed, rather than providing solutions for the effective tackling of anti-Muslim hate crime and remedying the absence of reliable statistical data, the legacy of the Tell MAMA project serves only to remind us that the under-reporting of crime within British Muslim communities remains a significant problem for both victims and police, and that the urgent need for robust analyses of reliable data remains largely undiminished.

Conclusion

Given the widespread use of limited research designs and the misleading generalisations these are capable of generating (as described above) this paper proposes that additional criminological research (both quantitative and qualitative) is needed to describe the nature and extent of 'everyday' hate crime against British Muslim communities. Under-reporting, and thus under-recording, are common features for many crime types.²² Incidents such as discrimination in public places (e.g. verbal abuse) may well be particularly susceptible to under-reporting and under-recording. Victims may feel that such crime is too minor to be reported to the police, or that the police are ineffective in this regard. Similarly, victims may not appreciate that they have been the victim of a crime at all. Indeed, anecdotal evidence from the literature suggests this to be the case.²³ For British criminologists and social scientists to describe more accurately anti-Muslim hate crime in the UK there needs to be a shift in research focus away from police relations and violent crime (where there is scant statistical evidence to support assertions of the increased risks faced by British Muslim communities) and towards less physical forms of discrimination in public spaces. Statistical evidence suggests that there is a pressing need to undertake further research into how 'everyday' hate crime currently informs the lives of British Muslim communities.

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An Exploration of Muslim Consciousness in the Narratives of Muslim Women in East London

NASIMA HASSAN

Abstract

This paper is based on a wider study which set out to locate and explore the term ‘Muslim consciousness as experienced by female participants located in East London’. The theoretical framework applied Islamic feminism and post-colonial theory in the process of uncovering how the participants experienced Muslim consciousness. In this paper the findings from one participant, Sahara, will provide a background for how the fully Muslim consciousness is embedded in the narrative (and life experience) of this participant.

Introduction

In focusing on Muslim consciousness I aim to engage in a timely, politically charged, often controversial discourse which I argue cannot be avoided in any study with Muslim participants. Muslim consciousness, as applied in this paper, is understood as a concept which maintains that faith is central. Furthermore, Muslim consciousness is a collective of diverse political and global discourses from a historical and contemporary perspective and experienced as a form of double consciousness by the participants in the original study on which this paper is based. As a monotheistic way of life, Islam is based on the belief in an omnipresent, omniscient creator (Allah) therefore Muslim consciousness is a concept that informs the specific experiences of Muslim women. However, it is more complex than this. Muslim consciousness is a term which reflects the centrality of Islam as a way of life as an ontological fact and is a form of double consciousness in the lived experiences of the Muslim women who participated in the original study and were based in East London. East London as a location celebrates an established historic relationship with migrant communities and the Muslim diaspora has a recognized part in this story. Indeed the transformation of key London landmarks such as Brick Lane and Whitechapel, now synonymous with diverse Muslim communities but in particular with the Bangladeshi diasporas¹ is evidence of the globalization of this part of London; a space of communities with a community and the predominance of British Islam. With

this in mind, I would suggest (based on my experience in the field) that East London is significant as a location as it represents a central hub, an epicenter for progressive British Muslims. This representation is evident on many levels; it is visible in the use of space and buildings dedicated to learning about Islam; it is notable on a social and political level in the multiplicity of groups attracted to this location and in the myriad of ways that they choose to self represent and finally, it is evident on a spiritual level in the urgency, passion and focus applied to the vast range of discourses addressed in gatherings, both faith based and secular. East London is a location with a young population, experiencing multiple levels of deprivation and under the powerful scrutiny of national and global media while at the same time seeking recognition and self-identity, all of which culminate in making this setting both purposeful and relevant to this study. Embedded within this is the understanding that, for the participants, East London is not just a space that is occupied but a space of belonging,² despite the assumed fragmentations of hybridity and complexities of negotiating many competing influences; to conclude East London, as a space in itself is in a constant state of renewal and reformation; it is made, then remade.

Muslim Women: A Political Re-imagining

The absence of academic discourse capturing the experience of Muslim women historically tells a story in its own right. This prevents the construction of a historic Muslim consciousness as illustrated in the work of contemporary social theorist Homi Bhabha's (1994)³ concept of Muslim women occupying the 'third space' which 'becomes a space of contradiction, repetition, ambiguity and disavowal of colonial authority'.⁴ Thus, the Muslim woman as a woman of historic relevance and significance in British history is noted as the subordinate colonial figure. In recent years, a heightened focus on Muslim women as change makers has gripped the attention of government with a direct focus on national security against terrorism.⁵ In locating a politicized re-imagining, British Muslim women in sensationalized news stories have reflected the mood music of the post 9/11 and the post 7/7 era. My own journey can also be located within the pathways in which Muslim women have been portrayed and treated in the history of British Colonialism and Imperialism; they have occupied extremes of invisibility, self-erasure and hyper visibility.⁶

Theories of Consciousness

The conceptual model I have applied is embedded in very specific literature which is critical to a fuller understanding of what Muslim consciousness is and how it is experienced by the participants in the original study. Consequently, discourses on Islamic feminist consciousness explore the centrality of faith and place women at the heart of Quranic exegesis⁷ thereby confirming that faith is the keystone to Muslim consciousness. Considered the most influential black intellectual in American history, the conceptual model also captures the work of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868 – 1963) whose body of work is regarded as foundational in the American conceptualization of ‘race’ and difference and his ideas have shed great insight into my exploration of Muslim consciousness in the British context. The Du Boisian canon is proliferated with works on ‘consciousness’ and the notion that consciousness is derived from the treatment of a majority power source or a dominant group in society, thus, a Du Boisian theorization of consciousness is uniquely matched to the needs of this paper and the wider exploration of the term Muslim consciousness. In order to grasp the centrality of double consciousness in understanding Muslim consciousness the writings of the Du Boisian canon are critical, as demonstrated in the following (oft cited) extract:

‘The Negro is born with a veil, and a gifted second sight in this American world – a world which yields to him no true self consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.’⁸

In this extract the imposed double life of the African American is set out in painful detail incorporating powerful imagery of psychic despair culminating in the humiliating lived experience that is the Black man’s lot. Du Bois takes the reader carefully by the hand and lets them, as far as is possible, feel the disconnection and disruption of the twoness of the African American. Fundamentally, this extract is about loss and inner torment; to strive for oneness and recognition which remains unrealized. Du Bois is making a claim of ownership for this hybridized identity which has been thrust upon him and the people he is addressing by the total domination of transatlantic slavery, arguing that in their Negro soul ‘there is a message to the world’. This is powerful rhetoric, as it is up to the reader (or listener) what that message may be, based on their own personal journey. Hence, both heritages, American and Negro must be accepted, or recognized, in order to prevent the ‘doors of Opportunity’ being closed for them; an all too familiar experience.

The Findings of the Original Study

Data captured in the original study links to a vast range of discourses, however this paper will address discourses on the politics of dress and liquid modernity in the form of an ever changing self-identity as expressed by one of the life history interviewees; Sahara. Sahara is aged 45, divorced, with no children. She is the youngest of four siblings; she has an elder brother and two older sisters. Sahara's parents emigrated from Sylhet in Bangladesh in 1965 and lived with extended family in various East London locations for eight years before securing their own council property in Bethnal Green. Sahara was taken to Bangladesh at the age of 15 and a marriage took place with a cousin 10 years her senior. Sahara complied with her parent's request, but on her return to London, she refused to have any contact with her husband and his family in Bangladesh. As a consequence of her decision, which was not supported by her family, Sahara left home aged 17, a divorcee. Following two years of instability, Sahara was able to engage in evening classes to gain sufficient qualification to study Business Investment Banking at University. In her final year she secured a placement with a financial consultancy in Canary Wharf, a role which secured her first full time post. Sahara currently works for an international investment bank in Canary Wharf. In terms of dress, Sahara made the decision to wear a *hijab* and *jilbab* during her undergraduate study and continues to do so at present.

Q: Describe how you choose to dress?

'Well I am really into fashion, 100%. I like to keep on trend, it's part of my life. When it comes to how I dress, well, I just cover my hair. It's as simple as that. It is a humble dress – I am covered. By humble I mean in mind and in appearance. It's interesting, but I have encountered many women who are hyper fashionable and also humble. It's very clear but I am not trapped, or I have not trapped myself, like created a prison for myself. I know that it is what some people see and it is what some people are spoon fed in what we read in the papers and watch on telly – [I] do all the things I want to – experience lots of things. How I dress, in my mind, is an automatic action each day which does not sum me up.'

Q: Have you been affected by the global portrayal of Muslim women?

Of course, how can I not be? I am on the front line and I have to answer a lot of questions and I am prepared to do that. But I am several women all at the same time, as far as the questions that I am asked go – I am an expert on Foreign Policy; I am an expert on the inner issues on the Palestinian state – that comes up a lot. I am an expert on other women and why they wear the clothes that they wear and behave they way that they do. I am definitely an expert on the news when a huge issue about Muslims comes up, like when some crazy Muslims burned the poppy in a protest – [...] or when Spanish government ban the *niqaab* in Municipal buildings, [...] or when Obama's inauguration used his middle name 'Hussain' – I was asked... 'What do Muslims feel about that?...' I mean, my God – how would I know how over a billion people feel about that? I am just one person.

(Sahara, 45, British Bengali).

In response to the first question Sahara's views are embedded in her own personal journey of choice and empowerment in her dress, her education and even her current home located in Canary Wharf, London's financial and commercial hub. She speaks not from a leadership standpoint, but from one woman's rationale and decision making, thus representing no one but herself and this is a significant dimension in comprehending the diversity and multiplicity of Muslim women's identity in the British context and how Muslim consciousness is a by-product of this exploration of identity. Sahara's standpoint is supported by Myfanwy Franks⁹ who concludes, 'In the Western world, *hijab* has come to symbolize either toned silence or radical unconscionable militancy. Actually, it's neither. It's simply a woman's assertion that judgment of her physical person is to play no role whatever in her social interaction'. Sahara deconstructs media-fuelled stereotypes implicit in her choice of words - trapped, prison – and rejects what she perceives as media reinforcement of essentialized characteristics leading to such powerfully embedded stereotypes. The notion of being trapped, thus in need of rescue¹⁰ is a reminder of the ideology of Orientalism and the asymmetric power dynamic of the west on the east as reflected by Sheridan Prasso¹¹ who reports on the distorted lens of the western gaze through an Orientalist filter. Perhaps this is Sahara's lived experience, an awareness of the Orientalist filter...' [...] the veil which only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world... [...].¹²

Thus, Sahara's experience is one of misrecognition through double consciousness, a feeling so familiar that her response is automatic. Sahara does not embody impression management¹³ in seeking both authenticity and acceptance. Nor is she the oppressed subaltern subject, preoccupied with re-shaping the perceptions of others. Instead, Sahara taps into Edward Said's¹⁴ 'voyage in' mentality whereby the other is brought to the center of the discourse and promptly dismantled. In its place, as the second paragraph demonstrates, is liquid modernity¹⁵ in the form of an ever changing self-identity with a particular focus on hybridity.¹⁶ This is evident in a British Muslim woman of Bengali heritage seeking to absorb and reflect Arabian fashion,¹⁷ however, fundamentally – it is about a Muslim woman who chooses to cover her hair as a sign of her personal commitment to her faith.¹⁸ In the findings of the original study it was concluded that Sahara's identity has therefore been shaped and influenced by Muslim consciousness which has empowered this confident self-identity as a professional and as a practicing British Muslim woman.

In response to the second question, Sahara recounts overwhelming experiences of enforced representation, based on popular news items linked to Islam and Muslims, an experience she has become accustomed to. It was not an unusual event at work on any given day or prior to a team gathering, for a work colleague to direct the current news item of the day (linked to global issues involving Muslims) to Sahara for her *explanation*; a marked distinction from her *opinion* on the news item. This often took place with other staff as eager audience members, waiting to hear Sahara's account. Sahara reveals that the cumulative effect of being placed in this position is to rationalize that the stance she now occupies is 'on the front line'; thereby reflecting a battle-ready mindset to cope with the extremes of othering projected onto her – leading her to conclude 'I am just one person'. This experience is stark on many levels, not least of which is that fact that Sahara is not the only person who self-identifies as a Muslim in her workplace; in other words, there are others colleagues who could (but are not asked to) offer an explanation on global news events. Sahara's experience is an exemplar of the allocation of multiple roles¹⁹ in identity theory, supporting the notion of multiple selves.²⁰ It is at the moment of 'being on the front line' that Sahara is placed in a position where she is acutely aware of the multiple selves she must embody in order to manage the questions directed towards her. Additionally, the control theorist²¹ position which would argue that society can act as an agent of influence has clear impact on Sahara's self identification in her rejection of the enforced expert role. Despite the obvious marker of group identity (the wearing of the *hijab* and *jilbab*) and group membership (as someone who makes time in the day to visit the prayer room) Sahara is subject to an ideological tug of war in the process of othering. Her physical appearance in a corporate setting is a further dimension in her othering and is something she cannot be supported in as she is unique in her choice of dress in London's financial epicenter. She is therefore subject to extremes of (mis)recognition by the associations made to so many different types of Muslims and their particular geo-political stories. To conclude, it is evident that Sahara's words are reflective of her life experience of Muslim consciousness via a form of double consciousness.

Conclusion

For me, it seems strange to have to defend this position, but militant atheism and secularism have such a strong hold in the West, that it would appear that

an alternative world view – one based on faith – needs to be defended in this context. In attempting to locate and explore Muslim consciousness it is critical to embrace the ontological and epistemological basis of belief in Allah. In accordance, the epistemology is understood to be knowledge of Allah, a consciousness of an all-knowing Allah, which is *the central creed* of Islam and relies on a very specific experience. A specific knowledge base underpins the experience of Muslim consciousness, which only Muslims can have. In addition, a feminist ontology forms an integral part of the original study arguing that Muslim women have a special type of knowledge because of their experiences and their belief in Allah. This ontology is tied to belief in Allah, thus strengthens the ontological position and leads to a legitimate female epistemological knowledge, where Muslim women are the ‘knowers’ and no longer excluded from masculine forms of understanding how society operates.²² To conclude, Muslim consciousness is understood as a concept which maintains that faith is central. This is an unambiguous fact. Additionally, Muslim consciousness is a collective of diverse political and global discourses from a historical and contemporary perspective and is experienced as a form of double consciousness by the participants in the original study.

Notes

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In Search of 'Pure' Islam: Conversion to Salafism Among Young Women in London

ANABEL INGE

Abstract

Despite media and political interest, Salafi women in Britain have not been the subject of in-depth empirical study, until now. This paper argues that their involvement in the group can be conceptualized as a 'conversion', and illuminates this process through evidence from ethnographic research in London. Interviews reveal that conversion to Salafism was often delayed and interrupted by experiments with other approaches to Islam, as the women navigated an Islam 'market', trying to identify an 'authentic' brand. Initially, many resisted Salafism because they were put off by the group's poor public image and encounters with ill-mannered adherents. Gradually, however, the women became convinced that Salafism alone represented 'pure' Islam, free from opinion, personality, emotion, tradition and culture. The Salafis supported their rulings with the Qur'an and Sunna; were reassuringly rigid in their religious practice; provided a 'serious' religious learning environment; were associated with the 'authentic' aura of Saudi Arabia; and supplied guidance on even the most minute and mundane of everyday matters. In contrast to other studies of conversion in new religious movements, this research finds that social networks and affective ties played only a limited role. The data support an intellectual, rather than passive or affective, conversion model – contrary to the prevailing discourse on veiled or 'radical' Muslim women – and the conceptualization of a new form of conversion, delayed conversion, which may arise in liberal, pluralist religious milieus.

Thousands of Muslim women in Britain, both converts and born-Muslims, have become Salafis over the past two decades.¹ Salafism (often called 'Wahhabism')² seeks to restore the pristine purity of Islam by returning to the 'original' sources – the Qur'an and Sunna – and encouraging Muslims to emulate the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-salih*, generally understood to mean the first three generations of Muslims). This scripturalist and literalist version of Islam has had a significant yet modest UK presence since at least the early 1990s,³ and has largely adopted a quietist posture, focused on non-violent moral reform and rejecting conventional forms of political organisation and action.⁴

Yet particularly since 9/11, Salafism's socially conservative attitudes and

practices – which include an emphasis on the *niqab* and restrictions on women’s ability to work and travel – have caused controversy and attracted media and political interest. The prevailing discourse of this era paints Salafi women and other ‘radical’ Muslim women as passive, vulnerable and possibly naïve victims of oppressive, manipulative male ideologues. Thus far, however, there has been no in-depth, empirical attempt to understand women’s experiences of Salafism in the UK.

Should their involvement even be described as a ‘conversion’? In keeping with Meredith McGuire’s⁵ broad definition of conversion as ‘a transformation of one’s *self* concurrent with a transformation of one’s basic *meaning system*’, adherence to Salafism in Britain can certainly be conceptualized as a form of conversion.⁶ Nearly all followers have been raised on non-Salafi belief systems – though a new generation of born-Salafis is beginning to emerge – and embracing Salafism has involved major renegotiations of identity and lifestyle for born-Muslims and converts alike.⁷

My ethnographic research, the result of over two years of participant observation and 35 interviews,⁸ seeks to illuminate how and why young women in London have adopted an identity based on neither the religious orientation of their parents nor that of the dominant wider culture. This paper addresses the initial stages of this conversion, and is largely based on interviews with a sample of 23 women in London, the majority of whom (18) were raised as (non-Salafi) Muslims. The women were aged between 19 and 29 and from a range of ethnic and educational backgrounds (see Tables 1-5).⁹ I argue that their conversion was 1) often delayed and interrupted by experiments with other approaches to Islam; and 2) largely intellectual, rather than passive or affective in nature.

Table 1: *Interviewees by age*

19	20	21	22	23	24	25	27	29
1	2	3	4	5	2	3	2	1

Table 2: *Interviewees: born-Muslims and converts*

Born-Muslim	Convert
18	5

Table 3: *Interviewees' countries of origin*

Somalia	Eritrea	Nigeria	Jamaica	South Asia	North Africa	Kenya	Southern Africa ¹⁰
11	4	3	1	1	1	1	1

Table 4: *Interviewees' ages when came to Britain*

Born here	Too young to remember / 1 or less	3	5	9	10	11	13	15	16
4	5	1	3	4	2	1	1	1	1

Table 5: *Interviewees' highest educational qualifications (including courses currently completing)*

BTech	Access course	NVQ	Diploma	Foundation degree	BA	BSc	MA
3	1	1	2	1	9	5	1

All of the women had been religiously conscious from an early age, yet confused by the inconsistencies and ambiguities of the belief systems within which they were raised, which also often placed them at odds with their secular, pluralist environments. Typically, those from Muslim families said that their Islamic instruction was largely limited to uninspiring lessons on the Qur'an in Arabic without translation, which were provided by madrasas linked to the families' ethnic communities. Their parents tended to encourage prayer and a mild degree of covering and gender segregation, for example, wearing hijab for the mosque and avoiding close relationships with unrelated men. Yet there was also an emphasis – especially from refugee parents – on integrating into mainstream society, for example, by relaxing everyday dress codes and celebrating Christmas. For the girls, these mixed messages were confusing, especially once they started making non-Muslim school friends who questioned their unfamiliar practices:

We only prayed when we went to the mosque, and we wore our little headscarves and stuff when we went to the mosque. But then, when we went out, my mum would do my little pigtailed to go to school. It was part of who you are, but at the same time you had to fit into society. So it was quite confusing. (Fowsiya, Somali)

As for the converts, Christianity had been a significant part of their childhoods, but the girls gradually became sceptical, struggling to grasp the concept of the Trinity. They also grew impatient with the vague and inconsistent replies that Christians gave them when they asked about the afterlife.

All of the women experienced a spiritual awakening between the ages of 16 and 22 – a time commonly associated with formation and identity crises,¹¹ which drove them to invest serious effort in practising and remedying their ignorance of Islam. Nearly all were at college or university at the time, and significant triggers were social networks and personal crises.¹² For some converts, this awakening coincides with conversion to Islam, but for my convert interviewees, it took time – in some cases, years – to resolve to take their new religion seriously.

However, armed with little Islamic knowledge, the women often found themselves overwhelmed by confusion as they grappled with the many sources of information available – websites, video, audio recordings, books, university Islamic Society talks, friends, relatives, boyfriends – all promoting different ideas about how a Muslim woman should conduct herself. In this way, the women navigated a crowded and disorienting Islam ‘market’, as they tried to identify an ‘authentic’ brand among the competing approaches to creed, politics and jurisprudence.

It was only when I got to college, I realized there was different types of Muslims, you know – I’m being serious! I didn’t know this!... It was something that I was not taught. (Saidah, Nigerian, born-Muslim)

At first, the women simply learned from any source with an ‘Islamic’ aura, and their starting point was often talking to friends or even using Google. This led them to experiment with approaches as diverse as Sufism, Al-Muhajiroun and politically-oriented university Islamic Societies. In fact, many women learned about Islam simultaneously from sources that were linked to groups or approaches plainly at odds with one another. For example, Shukri googled ‘Islamic talks’ and found that the late Yemeni-American Jihadi preacher Anwar Al-Awlaki came up as the first result. Impressed by his knowledge and oratory, she listened to his lectures devotedly for some time, along with those of ‘any person who said they’re Muslim’.

At least half of the women encountered Salafism at this early stage in their religious seeking, yet they initially resisted it, preferring livelier and ‘friendlier’ groups and approaches. Part of the reason for this was Salafism’s ‘image problem’: among British Muslims, Salafism – referred to by many of its followers as ‘the saved sect’, meaning the only one destined for (immediate) Paradise – is often regarded as an extremist approach that encourages sectarianism, imposes draconian restrictions on women and distorts ‘true’ Islam.

In addition, although Salafi preachers advise adherents to give *da‘wa* (i.e. call others to ‘true’ Islam) in a gentle and humble manner, numerous women said that the judgmental and unwelcoming attitude of some women initially kept them away from Salafi environments. Indeed, three women who later converted said that they had felt judged and intimidated when they first attended a Salafi event, wearing colourful hijabs and make-up.

Salafism promotes a clear distinction between the ‘halal’ and the ‘haram’, as well as the ‘straight path’ and ‘the deviated’, allowing far less ambiguity about the permissibility of different types of hijab, for instance, than other groups. Its teachings also require followers to repudiate evil wherever possible, rather than merely disapproving of it silently. Thus, these two aspects of Salafi groups provide great potential for heated confrontations between Muslims.

Hayah had been reluctant to become involved with her local Salafi community because, “I felt that you had to be in all black with *niqab*, you know, you had to be holding the banner of Salafi to be accepted.” Manal and her fellow Eritrean friends were upset by comments from converts there who “felt we were a bit too done-up” and, she suspected, were wary of young, pretty girls who might have entered the community to become second wives to their husbands.

Several other women reported that the welcome they had received at non-Salafi mosques, and within other groups, was distinctly lacking when they entered Salafi environments. Asmaa attended some Salafi conferences during her initial experiment with Al-Muhajiroun, but was not tempted to switch allegiances until much later. Unlike the Salafis, the Al-Muhajiroun women were:

...very helpful; if they find out that your husband’s in prison or, you know, you’re struggling,

they clearly show a lot more sympathy than the Salafis, in a way. They'll be there for you, they'll cook for you, they'll clean for you, they'll show you love... I wasn't drawn to the Salafi *da'wa* [i.e. call] because – it was almost cold... [Al-Muhajiroun] were friendly and welcoming... They welcome you... and they take your number, they become friends with you, and it's just it was a lot more open.

Choosing Salafism

So why did these women turn to Salafism in the end? My most consistent finding is that followers choose Salafism because they are persuaded by Salafis' claim to teach the Qur'an and Sunna *purely*, free from human alteration or addition.¹³ For the women, Salafism emerged as a version of Islam based on evidence, rather than charismatic preachers or culturally ingrained 'innovations'. And despite their harshness, 'unwelcoming' Salafis were later judged to be a reassuring testament to Salafism's uncompromisingly Islamic approach.

The women previously attached to more politically-oriented groups said that they became conscious of an emotionally charged atmosphere at events, which, they felt, disguised a lack of substantive religious teaching. Salafi lessons, on the other hand, involved serious study of Islam's most fundamental tenets – notably, the doctrine of *tawhid* (i.e. absolute monotheism) – and both teachers and followers offered proofs from the Qur'an and Sunna to support their statements:

When I went to [a Salafi lesson] I felt like... I was actually learning with a book and a pen and I was learning the fundamentals of the *din* [i.e. religion] and proofs. (Fowsiya, previously attached to a politically-oriented university Islamic Society)

By rejecting beliefs and practices deemed to have cultural origins, Salafism offered refreshing certainty for those who were still questioning their parents' traditions, such as the tendency to take jurisprudential rulings exclusively from the *madhhab* (school of Sunni Islamic law) dominant in their countries of origin. In particular, Salafism's rejection of a *madhhab*-oriented approach in favour of an emphasis on the 'original' sources not only bestowed a sense of authenticity, but also bypassed the confusing issue for converts of choosing a *madhhab*, since their backgrounds did not predispose them to one over the others.

Of course, while Salafis claim to rely strictly on the Qur'an and Sunna, they

also draw on the deliberations of certain conservative ulama, many of whom live in Saudi Arabia. Yet the women were persuaded that these scholars were legitimate articulators of the Qur'an and Sunna by virtue of the fact that most lived and/or studied in Islam's two holiest cities, and studied for long periods under other established scholars. For example, Asmaa, who was initially convinced by Al-Muhajiroun's pro-suicide bombing stance, later revised her views because respected Salafi ulama had given Qur'anic evidence against it, having "studied Islam for 70 years".

Many of these scholars also enjoy considerable authority among Muslims in general, particularly famous names such as Shaykhs 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz (1910-1999), Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914-1999) and Muhammad ibn Salih al-Uthaymin (1925-2001). In fact, some of the women I met seemed unaware that established non-Salafi ulama even existed.

With their strict 'Qur'an and Sunna-only' message, Salafis also position themselves to take advantage of a much-debated hadith in order to demand whole-hearted and exclusive allegiance from religious seekers. In this narration, the Prophet Muhammad reportedly foretold the existence of one 'saved sect' among 73, who would be "those who are upon that which I and my Companions are upon today". Salafi preachers recite this frequently, stressing that such a group could only be one that called purely on the Qur'an and Sunna. The hadith was crucial in persuading at least four women that a 'pick and mix' approach to religion was no longer an option, and that joining the Salafis was the only 'guarantee' of Paradise.

The whole thing about being, on the day of *qiyama* [judgment] there's going to be 73 sects of Islam – so why not try and pick the path that is so close to the way the Prophet (s.a.w.) lived his life? So that to me was a big influence, just reading that hadith. (Amina)

Another pull factor was the comprehensiveness and explicitness of Salafi teachings, which are easily accessible online or through local preachers and address mundane and everyday issues facing Muslims in the West, as well as major creedal ones. Seven women spoke of the convenience of having clear-cut guidelines on everything from lavatory etiquette to how to interact with 'deviant' Muslims.

Many described a sense of 'inner peace' or 'tranquillity' at having finally found an approach that provided clear answers they could trust to all of their

questions, and a ‘guarantee’ that – if they followed the teachings – they would attain Paradise.

The best thing about *salafiyya* [Salafism] is knowing that the way I’m trying to practise Islam isn’t going in vain... Their *dalil* [proof from the Qur’an and/or Sunna] proves to me that I’m doing things correctly, or I can – I know if I wanna do things correctly, they’re the resource I would go to, you know? (Abeer)

Thus for them, Salafism gave life a clear purpose – as well as a legitimate excuse to avoid other groups with contradictory messages. Several mentioned that it was reassuring to know that if they stuck to Salafi teachings, all of their actions could potentially be blessed by God because they would be practising Islam in the way He had originally intended. Saidah articulated this clearly: she likened her conversion to Salafism to the discovery of a ‘manual’, a complete set of instructions to life that, if meticulously followed, would guarantee God’s pleasure and, ultimately, Paradise.

In contrast to other studies of conversion in new religious movements,¹⁴ I discovered that social networks and affective ties played only a limited role in the conversion process. Rather, involvement with Salafism generally incurred a social cost, rather than gain, and frequently came *despite*, rather than because of, encounters with adherents.

On the one hand, the encouragement and/or accompaniment of a friend, relative or boyfriend was often necessary for the women to take the crucial step of attending a Salafi event, which they might have otherwise avoided. Affective ties to the new group were also significant in a few cases, particularly for those who had previously struggled to find Muslims of a similar ethnic and social background. For instance, Wafa, a Nigerian convert, had thought that she was “the only black Muslim in the world” until she visited Brixton Mosque, a hub for black converts in south London. She said:

The Asians, can’t relate to them, but I can relate to these black people because they spoke the same, had the same background-ish. They were a bit more rowdy, you know, piercings and all of that, had children already, that kind of thing.

On the other hand, the crucial social encounters that steered the women towards Salafism were often fleeting and seen as significant only on later reflection, as Maha Al-Qwidi¹⁵ also found to be the case in her study of Muslim converts. For example, Hayah looked into Salafism seriously after a

conversation with a Salafi she met while picking up her child from playgroup; the woman had later emailed her a text by Shaykh Al-Albani.

In addition, embracing Salafism placed nearly all of the women at odds with some, often most, of their friends and relatives. Twelve lost friends as a result, and eighteen clashed with close family members (usually parents) over their adoption of Salafism, leading a few to sever ties with certain relatives. Moreover, in many cases, these losses were not compensated for by new friendships within the community, as many initially struggled to form attachments to Salafis.

These findings support an intellectual, rather than passive or affective, model of conversion, contrary to the prevailing discourse on women's involvement in 'radical' Muslim groups.¹⁶ While the women had divergent routes into Salafism, with some more influenced by social factors than others, all needed to understand it as a coherent belief system that made intellectual sense before they could accept it.

In addition, the data support the conceptualization of a new form of conversion – *delayed conversion* – that may arise in pluralist religious settings in which religious seekers are free to 'shop around' before making an exclusive, enduring commitment. Despite encountering Salafism early on, many resisted affiliation until after exploration of and/or experimentation with, other, initially more attractive groups. This is a more intermittent, interrupted version of John Lofland and Norman Skonovd's¹⁷ 'experimental' conversion motif, where an individual actively explores religious options and 'tries out' a group before becoming fully committed and making sacrifices.

Notes

¹ I am very grateful for: the funding of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Walton Scholarship and King's Theological Trust; the support of my PhD supervisors at King's College London, Prof. Madawi Al-Rasheed and Dr Marat Shterin, among many others; and not least the participation of many anonymous Salafis who generously gave up their time and shared their experiences.

² Wahhabism is the form Salafism has taken in Saudi Arabia. Its main difference from Salafism relates to legal matters: while Wahhabism relies heavily on the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, Salafis tend to be *ijtihad*-minded. Yet the far-reaching propagative efforts of the Saudis in the second half of the twentieth century have led Salafism and Wahhabism to become synonymous

in the popular imagination in many respects. See: Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 42.

³ The informality of Salafi group organisation means that is difficult to estimate the number of Salafis in Britain, though they undoubtedly remain a modest component of the country's 2.7 million Muslims (Census 2011).

⁴ This would normally include eschewing voting, demonstrations and membership of political parties. But here, it must be noted that 'Salafi' is an elastic identity label invoked by groups with a variety of approaches to political engagement, including some that endorse violence. See: Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3; Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action".

⁵ Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context*, 5th ed. (Belmont, Calif. and London: Wadsworth, 2001), 73.

⁶ In agreement with Martijn de Koning, "Changing Worldviews and Friendship: An Exploration of the Life Stories of Two Female Salafis in the Netherlands," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 404-423; Fiore Geelhoed, *Purification and Resistance: Global Meanings of Islamic Fundamentalism in the Netherlands* (PhD, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2011) <http://repub.eur.nl/pub/31685> (accessed 20 June 2014); Cedric Bayloq and Akila Drici-Bechikh, "The Salafi and the Others: An Ethnography of Intracommunal Relations in French Islam," in *Ethnographies of Islam: Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices*, eds. Baudouin Dupret, Thomas Pierret, Paulo G. Pinto and Kathryn Spellman-Poots (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), ch.10.

⁷ Indeed, some of my interviewees described their transformation in conversionist language, referring to 'becoming Muslim' or 'reverting', raising an interesting similarity with 'born-again' Christian narratives.

⁸ Participant observation took place at mosques, community centres, social gatherings, conferences, homes, etc. in London between 2010 and 2012. In addition to the women, I interviewed 12 Salafi leaders.

⁹ My thesis goes on to investigate how women internalize Salafi teachings and apply them to their daily lives in a secular, liberal society. Please email me at anabel.inge@kcl.ac.uk if you would like to be updated about other publications resulting from this research.

¹⁰ Some information is deliberately vague to protect identities. All names are pseudonyms.

¹¹ McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context*, 62.

¹² Unfortunately, space does not permit me to detail the context of this initial spiritual awakening, which is described in my thesis.

¹³ This corresponds with other accounts of Salafism in the West, for example, Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst & Co., 2004); Sadek Hamid, "The Attraction of 'Authentic' Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 384-403; and Koning, "Changing Worldviews and Friendship".

¹⁴ See, for example, Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing?* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Lorne L. Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*, 2nd ed. (Don Mills, Ont.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 77-78; Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001) and *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 30:6 (1965), 871; and Koning, "Changing Worldviews and Friendship".

¹⁵ Maha Al-Qwidi, *Understanding the Stages of Conversion to Islam: The Voices of British Converts* (PhD, University of Leeds), http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/485/1/uk_bl_ethos_250876.pdf (accessed 20 June 2014), 178.

¹⁶ Corresponding with Al-Qwidi, *Understanding the Stages of Conversion to Islam* and Anne Sofie Roald, *New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

¹⁷ John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, "Conversion motifs," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20:4 (1981): 373-385.

Black, Female, Muslim and a Hip-Hop Artist: A Case Study of 'Poetic Pilgrimage'

ADVIYA KHAN

Abstract

Although conversion across religions is not new, the focus on British converts to Islam has recently increased in light of certain events, such as the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich in 2014, with claims that converts are more prone to radicalisation. Homogenized and stigmatized in the media, a real understanding of convert experiences is missing, especially the experiences of female converts, who are often portrayed as brainwashed by men and lacking autonomy. Similarly, within the Muslim community, female converts often face challenges of identity and, in some cases, have trouble confronting cultural norms. Confident and vocal female converts, especially within domains that are traditionally seen to be male, such as hip-hop, are rarely given the space to communicate their own narratives. Through ethnographic research, including the use of in-depth interviewing and observation, this study hopes to shed some light on the experiences of two British female converts to Islam who have formed their own hip-hop group called Poetic Pilgrimage, carrying on their love for music within their new found religion. The research explores how Poetic Pilgrimage is using hip-hop as a tool to connect, educate and empower young people, whilst negotiating challenges of faith, race and gender. Finally, this study will reflect on the complicated reality of identity construction for the duo and British Muslims in general.

In 2010, it was estimated that the number of British converts to Islam had reached over 100,000, the majority of whom were female.¹ Many ethnographic studies have shown converts often face struggles reconciling their new faith with their families, friends and lifestyles. Their presence can be treated with suspicion by the non-Muslim community, whilst some converts also report feeling a sense of exclusion from religious spaces within Muslim communities, and being under pressure to demonstrate their 'Muslimness'.² Whilst discourse around conversion has increased over the years, literature reviews reveal that Black female experiences were virtually absent. Some Black converts have noted that they feel a lesser 'social prestige' is afforded to them within both

academia and Muslim communities, in contrast to their White counterparts.³ This study therefore provides an important opportunity to hear from Sukina and Muneera, who are both converts from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, and to explore how they negotiated combining their passion for hip-hop with their faith.

Journalist Henry Allen once famously stated that, “Islam is hip-hop’s official religion,” and indeed from its emergence as a form of cultural expression in the 1970s, there has been an intricate relationship between Muslims and hip-hop.⁴ It is claimed that, “Muslim influence was at the ground floor of hip-hop,” because it “came from the streets, from the toughest neighbourhoods, and that’s always where the Muslims were.”⁵ Thus the emergence of the music genre is directly tied to the dismal socio-economic conditions of the inner cities. Subsequently, early hip-hop movements were strongly associated with the development of Black identity and nationalism, and groups such as the Nation of Islam,⁶ and the Five Percent Nation⁷ contributed greatly to “shaping its current form.”⁸ Teachings from both movements were incorporated into hip-hop. For example, Public Enemy (a Nation of Islam rapper), claims, “Farrakhan’s a prophet who I think you ought to listen to,” in one of his songs.⁹

Later, mainly as a result of conversion, Orthodox Islam gained more of an influence in the hip-hop scene and resulted in more Islamic references and symbols becoming “integrated throughout hip-hop music and culture.”¹⁰ Therefore hip-hop has had a substantial impact on Muslims and, in addition to being used as a tool to spread political and religious ideologies, it has also played a role in connecting with marginalized youth, especially in Black and Latino communities. The use of hip-hop to highlight social issues, such as poverty and injustice, contributed towards its global popularity, and to an extent continues to do so today. For example, contemporary Muslim hip-hop artist Lupe Fiasco regularly refers to faith and social justice in his music and in one track claims, “Jihad is not a holy war, where’s that in the worship? Murdering is not Islam! And you are not observant.”¹¹ In the same song he criticizes US President Barack Obama, stating that as, “Gaza strip was getting bombed, Obama didn’t say shit.”¹²

In spite of this strong cultural connection, the invisibility of Muslim women within the hip-hop scene and academia is quite apparent. Although various

scholars such as Hisham Aidi,¹³ Virinder Kalra, Shamim Miah¹⁴ and Suad Khabeer,¹⁵ have produced works examining the relationship between hip-hop and Muslims, there is a lack of in-depth research on female artists. This gap is unreflective of the various religious and cultural debates surrounding the place of Muslim women in the public sphere, as well as the existence of many female Muslim hip-hop artists, like Poetic Pilgrimage. I will now briefly discuss some of the most significant themes that emerged from the data.

Race and Identity

During the interview process it became clear that racism was a lived reality for Poetic Pilgrimage, and was far from one-dimensional. It came from various sectors of society, including Muslims and non-Muslims, and was manifested in terms of both colour racism and Islamophobia.

Both Sukina and Muneera felt there had been times when they were victims of Islamophobia. Although not new, in the post-9/11 world the depiction of Islam as inherently antagonistic to Western values has become especially prevalent.¹⁶ Both women adopt a visible sign of their faith in the form of the headscarf, which can highlight their ‘otherness’ within both society and the music industry. They also mentioned that some individuals from non-Muslim Black cultures were hostile to their conversion to Islam. This struggle on both fronts is reiterated by Daigle, a Canadian Muslim convert who states that, “Being Black and being Muslim is a double-bind. You have to face the Islamophobia of the general public, but particularly other Blacks, who seem to perceive Islam as an inauthentically Black religious option.”¹⁷

Additionally, both women have faced racism from within the British Muslim community, which largely consists of Muslims of South Asian or Arab heritage, and community ‘representatives’ of the same backgrounds.¹⁸ The Muslim Council of Britain, for example, claims representation of Muslims at a national and a political level, but reflects a certain ‘cultural capital,’ and lacks diversity in its leading positions.¹⁹ Similarly, Black Muslim voices are absent in media, politics and popular discussions around Islam, as well as British Muslim organisations and institutions, despite Islam’s strong connection with Black history and identity.²⁰

Poetic Pilgrimage started off as a group that got much criticism, from Muslims, from the music hip-hop community, the Caribbean community who said why did you convert to Islam; you

sold yourself, racists, and misogynists. We get so much slack [sic] from people, people who are racist and cruel and horrible, Muslims who are really cruel, Caribbean people who are cruel, and we have worked hard despite that.

(Muneera)

In the interview, Muneera's response to this animosity on all fronts was defiant: "We [Poetic Pilgrimage] work hard because we like it but also because it's important, it matters."

Gender

Another common theme throughout the interview was the issue of gender. Whilst this did not seem to have presented many barriers to the duo when performing at non-Muslim events, this was not always the case at Muslim-organized events. Indeed, although they are one of the leading female Muslim hip-hop acts in the UK, Poetic Pilgrimage, along with other female acts, are virtually invisible from mainstream Muslim TV channels, websites and events, unlike their male counterparts.

After converting to Islam, the group had initially contextualized their hip-hop music within an 'Islamic' music genre. However, this brought with it an implication of religiosity and a diversity of opinions about how that was defined. For example, some interpretations of Islamic scriptures see women as being unable to perform in front of men, and the "very sound of the female voice as a provocation to be forbidden in public space".²¹ Similarly, Khabeer notes that, "Certain legal opinions prohibit musical performances by women or advise that lyrics refer only to strictly religious topics."²² His interview with a female hip-hop/rap artist called MissUndastood revealed the difficulty with going against the expectation that, "Muslim women should be more reserved and conservative than her real-world counterpart," whilst male artists also felt threatened by her entering what they felt was their domain.²³

Other interpretations of Islamic scriptures reject the opinion that female artists are problematic. Islamic history and law scholar Wael Hallaq, for instance, states that Muslim women were vocal in both the public and private spheres of medieval Muslim societies, and some contemporary religious scholars have also lent their support to female artists.²⁴ Feminist perspectives go further to say such teachings have been fabricated to prevent women from being vocal in public life.²⁵

From what I gathered in the interview, the reaction Poetic Pilgrimage has received from the Muslim community as a female group has been mixed, and largely dependent on different religious traditions. It was so new for females to be on stage, we performed in a Mawlid, we were the first women who have ever been on that stage in front of rows of different scholars and it was really intense, and someone shouted ‘haram!’ But on the flip side, everyone was like to him get out and told them off. Everyone was really supportive.
(Muneera)

Some groups, especially Sufi ones (as in the case above), were more accepting of their performances to mixed audiences, as opposed to more visible organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain and Islamic Society of Britain.

Hip Hop as a Tool

The idea that hip-hop can be a tool for social change was central to the ethos of Poetic Pilgrimage, and was emphasised during the interview and performance. Muneera mentioned that they had initially formed the group because of their love for music and hip-hop, but also their desire to promote positive Black female role models. People build upon the idea that that hip-hop has “radical and liberating potential” and argue that it can be used to “speak to younger feminists”, which is important at a time when the mainstream music industry is becoming increasingly sexualized.²⁶

Khabeer also notes that the “heavy emphasis on bling-bling” (materialism) and “bagging honies” (sexual relations with women) in the mainstream hip-hop industry, has taken the emphasis away from its initial concern with “topics such as social justice”.²⁷ In light of this, Poetic Pilgrimage felt it was important to show an alternative narrative to “smoking, drinking, having premarital sex and using disrespectful language,” which has become associated with hip-hop.²⁸

In addition to encouraging positive role models, both Sukina and Muneera felt strongly that hip-hop could also be a platform from which young dissatisfied British Muslim youths could express themselves, since hip-hop from its very beginning has given young disenfranchised people “a cultural-political space”.²⁹ Hip-hop was used by young people to “express their race and ethnic identities and to critique racism” and in an age when many young Muslims may have experienced racism and/or Islamophobia, this is quite potent.³⁰

Some people began to realize on a social level a lot of young Muslims were not engaged in society, the same way we had a lot of politics thrown at us, we were supposed to put this cloak on. It's a lot to deal with. They can't deal with that so they were angry (and had dual identities) (Muneera)

Muneera explained that there had been cases when the very people from whom they had initially received strong criticism had changed their opinions once they realized hip-hop was a successful way of engaging a disconnected youth. Professor of Anthropology Sammy Alim emphasises the power of communication that hip-hop holds and describes it as having been, since its inception “an active vehicle for social protest in the U.S. and around the world”.³¹ Mos Def also highlights the power of disseminating messages through hip-hop and asks, “Do you know how much vital information you could get across in 3 minutes?”³²

Similarly, Poetic Pilgrimage also found hip-hop was a platform from which radical ideas could also be confronted and challenged, instead of being swept under the carpet. It was clear in the interview that they felt strongly about the need for Muslims to do more to reach out to the wider community. Muneera felt that the 7/7 terror attacks in London, which coincided with both her and Sukina's conversion to Islam, was a pivotal event for them. At a time when they were dealing with redefining their identities as new Muslims, 7/7 forced them to reconsider the aims and goals of their hip-hop careers as they recognized a need for better engagement between Muslims and society. The passion both Sukina and Muneera have for this subject is reflected in their regular involvement with projects in local communities.

Conclusion

Of the various themes that emerged during the study, the most predominant was around the complicated reality of identity construction. Reports on young British Muslims often reflect on the complexity “around identity, belonging and citizenship” which is contributing to an identity crisis.³³ However, when conducting observations of Poetic Pilgrimage's performances, I was struck by the confidence they displayed, not only in their musical ability but also their identity and character.

They both wore brightly coloured clothes, vibrant scarves and bold accessories, including a head wrap which echoed the Rastafarian culture

which Sukina's parents were born into. When asked about the way they dressed, Muneera said, "Do I have to wear a Saudi Arabian outfit if I don't live in the desert? No, not really." There was a clear acceptance of being a British Muslim and not having to cling on to what some regard as traditional Islamic cultures, especially as a convert.

It is important that converts feel like they don't have to completely negate their culture, because some reverts are like, 'I am from Jamaica but I am a Muslim now so it doesn't matter.' Of course it does. God made you Jamaican, you should embrace your culture, and you should accept that. (Muneera)

Although Poetic Pilgrimage regarded their faith as an important aspect of their identity, they openly refused to be defined solely through this lens. Thus, despite Kalra, Miah and Khabeer's research on Muslims in hip-hop being framed as part of an 'Islamic music' genre, Sukina and Muneera saw themselves as part of the wider genre of hip-hop that emerged in the 1970s. Poetic Pilgrimage felt inspired by their religion, like many well-known hip-hop artists, such as Mos Def and Anaya McMurray, but not defined by it.³⁴ Muneera emphasised this fact repeatedly throughout the interview, and clarified they would rather describe themselves as having "a slight Muslim gaze".

The research also highlighted a problem with the issue of nominal identification and categorisation of Muslims in contemporary Britain which, as we have seen, is often removed from self-affirmed identities. Indeed, homogenising such a diverse community has become increasingly common in the media, politics, and also in research, despite Muslims being "neither ethnically nor ideologically homogenous".³⁵ Muslims and non-Muslims have been guilty of such categorisation following the Rushdie Affair of 1989, which overshadowed ethnic or racial affiliations for Muslims. The shift from race to religion was enforced by the media and politicians, but also provided the landscape for individuals to "stake a claim for the leadership of British Muslims and to present themselves as their true representatives".³⁶ Muneera openly challenged these self-appointed community leaders in the interview, stating that they didn't represent her, and reaffirmed the fact that she felt a vocal minority had taken over the discourse of Muslims in Britain. Indeed, although religion is important in the lives of many British Muslims, Muneera argued other identities, such as culture, race and gender, are equally important to make a "full human being". Similarly, they felt it was unnecessary for their

music to be defined by their conversion, and to fit within a contested and limited 'Islamic' music category.

Finally, although race, gender, faith and culture have all provided challenges for both women, especially post-conversion, for them there was no 'clash' between being Jamaican, Caribbean, British, Muslim converts, female and hip-hop artists. Their religious identities, like others, "intersect and interact with other identifications," and are fluid.³⁷ Their primary focus remained on their music and using hip-hop as a means to create social change. This included challenging the one-dimensional religious representation of Muslims, confronting the degradation of women in the hip-hop industry, and connecting with disengaged young people. Indeed, hip-hop is a powerful medium and although it has been largely regarded as the domain of men, there are an increasing number of Muslim women like Poetic Pilgrimage, who are utilising its impressive ability to connect, educate and inspire.

Notes

¹ M. A. Kevin Brice, *A Minority within a Minority: A Report on Converts to Islam in the United Kingdom* (Swansea: Faith Matters, 2010).

² Leon Moosavi, "British Muslim Converts Performing 'Authentic Muslimness,'" *Performing Islam* 1.

³ Yasir Suleiman, ed., *Narratives of Conversion to Islam in Britain: Female Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge Centre for Islamic Studies, 2013), 4.

⁴ Harry Allen, 'Righteous Indignation: Rappers Talk about the Strength and of Hip-Hop and Islam,' *The Source* 19 (March-April 1991): 48-53.

⁵ Naeem Mohaiemen, "Fear of a Muslim Planet: The Islamic Roots of Hip-Hop" in *Sound Unbound* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008), 1.

⁶ The Nation of Islam (NOI) is a Black Nationalistic movement, founded by Wallace Mohammed in 1930. Wallace claimed he was the manifestation of God on Earth.

⁷ The Five Percent Nation was founded in 1964 by Clarence 13X who refashioned the teachings of the NOI. It teaches that the Black man is God and that his proper name is ALLAH.

⁸ Suad Khabeer, "Rep That Islam: The Rhyme and Reason of American Islamic Hip Hop" in *The Muslim World* (Princeton: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 126.

⁹ Public Enemy, 'Bring Tha Noize' www.publicenemy.com/index.php?page=page5&item=4&num=101 (accessed 20th September 2013).

¹⁰ Khabeer, "Rep that Islam," 126.

¹¹ Lupe Fiasco, "Words I Never Said" on *Lasers* (2011).

¹² *Ibid.*,

- ¹³ Hisham Aidi, "Verily, There Is Only One Hip-Hop Umma: Islam, Cultural Protest and Urban Marginality," *Socialism and Democracy Online*, <http://sdonline.org/36/verily-there-is-only-one-hip-hop-umma-islam-cultural-protest-and-urban-marginality>, April 16 2011 (accessed 20th September 2013).
- ¹⁴ Shamin Miah and Virinder Kalra, "Muslim Hip-Hop: The Politicisation of Kool Islam," *South Asian Cultural Studies* 13.
- ¹⁵ Khabeer, "Rep that Islam," 126.
- ¹⁶ Kerry Moore, Paul Mason and Justin Lewis, "Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National News Media 2000-2008," Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies 2008, <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/resources/08channel4-dispatches.pdf> (accessed 20th September 2013).
- ¹⁷ Chelby Daigle, "Being Black, Being Muslim: Intersections and Contradictions" *The Woyingi Blog* 2010, <http://woyingi.wordpress.com/2010/07/21/being-black-being-muslim-intersections-and-contradictions> (accessed 2 April 2014).
- ¹⁸ Jocelyne Cesari and Sean McLoughlin, *European Muslims and the Secular State* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), 59.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ²⁰ Edward E. Curtis IV, "African-American Islamization Reconsidered: Black History Narratives and Muslim identity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73 (2005): 662.
- ²¹ Judith Tucker, *Women, Family and Gender in Islamic Law*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 30.
- ²² Khabeer, "Rep that Islam," 130.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 133.
- ²⁴ Wael Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.
- ²⁵ Asma Barlas, *Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002), 7.
- ²⁶ Whitney Peoples, "'Under Construction' Identifying Foundations of Hip-Hop Feminism and Exploring Bridges," *Meridians: Feminism, Race and Transnationalism* 8, 2007: 20.
- ²⁷ Khabeer, "Rep that Islam," 127.
- ²⁸ Anaya McMurray, "Hotep and Hip-hop: Can Black Muslim Women be Down with Hip-Hop?" *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 8: 88.
- ²⁹ Hisham Aidi, "Verily, There Is Only One Hip-Hop Umma: Islam, Cultural Protest and Urban Marginality," *Socialism and Democracy Online*, <http://sdonline.org/36/verily-there-is-only-one-hip-hop-umma-islam-cultural-protest-and-urban-marginality>, April 16 2011 (accessed 20th September 2013) 16.
- ³⁰ Peoples, "Under Construction", 21.
- ³¹ Samy Alim, "Re-inventing Islam with Unique Modern Tones: Muslim Hip Hop Artists as Verbal Mujahidin" *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2006: 49.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 50.

³³ Sughra Ahmed, “Seen and Not heard: Voices of Young British Muslims” *Policy Research Centre* (Leicestershire: Islamic Foundation, 2009), 47.

³⁴ McMurray, “Hotep and Hip-Hop,” 83.

³⁵ Humayum Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: Hurst & Co Publishers, 2004), 2.

³⁶ Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), 5.

³⁷ Cara Aitchison, *Geographies of Muslim Identities: Diaspora, Gender and Belonging* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 7.

Ismaili Discourse on Religion in the Public Sphere: Culture as a Mediating Concept

MOHAMMAD MAGOUT

Abstract

The Nizari Ismaili Muslim community runs two London-based institutions for postgraduate education and research in Islamic studies and social sciences: The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) and Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (ISMC). Through these two institutions the Ismaili community engages in a normative discourse on the nature of religion and its public relevance in contemporary societies. I will explain in this paper how this discourse employs the notion of culture as a mediator for religion in the public sphere. Culture serves to provide a legitimation for Islam in Western liberal societies by bridging the dualisms of modern secular discourse and Ismailism within the wider world of Islam as well as by deconstructing the essentialism of fundamentalist discourses. The following analysis is based on a review of a number of papers written by authors who are (or were at some point) affiliated with the IIS or the ISMC as researchers, faculty members, senior administrators, or in any other capacity.¹ In addition, some promotional media from the two institutes (such as course prospectuses) have been included in the analysis.

What are Ismailis Responding to?

In their discourse on Islam, the IIS and the ISMC are mainly addressing two broad intellectual and political currents: secularism and Islamic fundamentalism.² As a religious community with an extensive network of institutions that provide a vast array of social, economic and cultural services, Ismailis are understandably worried by exclusivist brands of secularism seeking to ‘purify’ the public sphere of religion. Equally worrisome for Ismailis, if not more, are fundamentalist movements spreading throughout the Muslim world, many of which see Ismailis as little more than heretics. Against these two opposing ideological forces, Ismailis are attempting to carve out a space for themselves as a legitimate Muslim community that is actively engaged in public life. The IIS and the ISMC can therefore be regarded as the academic or intellectual front of the community in its efforts to claim this space.

Critiquing Secularism

Aziz Esmail – one of the most prominent Ismaili intellectuals and a long-serving director and member of the Board of Governors of the IIS – identifies three “principal deficiencies” in secularism. First, Esmail asserts that secularism, while it treats religion as its “other”, ends up replicating some of its essential characteristics. He furthermore maintains that secularism is not well aware of its historical roots in Christianity and classical metaphysical thought. Finally, Esmail states that although secularism identifies human perfection as its ideal, it does not possess the adequate “conceptual tools” to deal with the “limit-points of human existence” (such as birth, suffering, and death) and the ethical questions closely related to them.³ Esmail frames these “deficiencies” in terms of lack of self-consistency and self-consciousness, which indicates that the major flaw in secularism from his perspective is not its relationship with religion as much as its relationship with itself and its ability to think reflexively.⁴

It should be noted that critiquing secularism does not entail that the concept of *secularity* is entirely rejected in Ismaili academic discourse on religion. In most of the papers considered here, the authors have been keen to make a distinction between *secularism* and the *secular*, whereby the first signifies *hostility* toward religion, whereas the latter refers to *neutrality*, such as neutrality of the state toward religious communities⁵ or neutrality of ‘public reason’.⁶ Ismailis share a collective memory of religious persecution and most Ismailis live as small minorities in countries with a recent history of sectarian violence,⁷ so it is in their best interest to prevent the state from being appropriated by the religious majority.

Critiquing Islamic Fundamentalism

Drawing on the writings of Mohammed Arkoun (who was a member of faculty and the Board of Governors of the IIS), Ayn Sajoo criticizes much of contemporary Islamic discourse for employing the “reductive idea” of a “moral totality validated entirely by divine teachings,” which serves to enhance the legitimacy of the ruling establishment by sacralising law, politics and civic norms. In his opinion, this does not reflect the classical Islamic *Weltanschauung*, whereby the relative autonomy of the different societal spheres is maintained without restricting religion to one sphere without the others.⁸ Farid Panjwani focuses on education and knowledge in his criticism of

fundamentalist trends. He maintains that this discourse takes an apologetic, monolithic and abstract approach to Islam, according to which Islam is a pure, unified set of ideals that manifested itself in historical reality during an alleged ‘Golden Age’.

The Ontology and Epistemology of Secularism

While the ontology and epistemology of fundamentalism have routinely been discerned in the social sciences, secular notions of reality and knowledge have generally been taken as self-evident. In his seminal work, *The Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad argued that the secular is an ontological and epistemological category that signifies *objectivity, reality and knowledge* as opposed to religion, which signifies *subjectivity, imagination and falsehood*.⁹ Asad maintained that *the secular* in this meaning cannot be separated from *secularism* as a socio-political ideology. He cited the writings of George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906) – one of the founders of the British secularist movement and the person who coined the term *secularism* – to show how secularism in its early days was concerned with epistemological as well as political reform.¹⁰

Asad demonstrated that *the secular* “works through a series of particular oppositions” (such as belief and knowledge, natural and supernatural, sacred and profane) to structure the world as a duality where the secular constitutes the side in which “*we actually live* as social beings”,¹¹ whereas religion is confined to the other side of the duality, that is, the realm of imagination and subjectivity. The classical paradigm of secularisation theory, like that of Peter L. Berger in his famous work *The Sacred Canopy*, assumes that religion within a secularist framework is confronted with two options: either to limit itself to the space circumscribed by secularism or to reject the secularist framework altogether by resorting to fundamentalism or traditionalism.¹²

This dual scenario for religion in the modern world has been criticized by many authors on empirical as well as normative grounds. For example, Jose Casanova asserted that many religions in the modern world, most notably Catholicism, were able to assert themselves in the public sphere without resorting to either of the two options specified by the classical secularisation paradigm.¹³ Ismailism can be studied as another example of a contemporary religion that attempts to defy this binary model. In what follows, I shall show how Ismaili discourse on religion in the public sphere employs the notion of

culture as a *mediating concept* to transcend the dualisms of modern secular discourse, on the one hand, and the essentialism of fundamentalist discourse on the other. But before that, I will explain where this idea of *mediation* comes from.

Mediating Concepts

In 1977 American sociologist Peter L. Berger and Canadian-American clergyman Richard John Neuhaus¹⁴ published a short book titled *To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy*, in which they argued that social services can be delivered more efficiently through the medium of civil society institutions than directly by the state.¹⁵ Berger and Neuhaus maintained that institutions such as churches, neighbourhoods and voluntary associations can act as *mediating structures* between the individual and the large institutions of public life, such as the state. They also asserted that these institutions are “the value-generating and sustaining institutions in democratic society”.¹⁶ Hence their mediating role is not merely functional or practical, but also moral for they maintain the moral fabric of society and its democratic values, according to Berger and Neuhaus.

Aziz Esmail similarly argued that “community life” can function as an “intermediate structure” between political collectivities and individual demands. Esmail extended this notion of *mediation* beyond social structures and institutions to include categories of thought. He maintained (much like Asad in *The Formations of the Secular*) that modern secular discourse is structured around “opposing categories of thought” – hence the need for “mediating concepts” to mediate between them.¹⁷

The primary mediating concept that Esmail employs in this regard is *culture*. He held that Islam is better understood when it is thought of as a *civilization* or *culture* rather than a body of beliefs, rituals and laws alone, because there is an “Islamic ethos” that is embodied in institutions and culture and it is distinct from theological creeds and legal formulations.¹⁸ The “temptation” to “disembody” Islam, according to Esmail, is analytically unsound and normatively “dangerous.”¹⁹ Esmail, therefore, uses the notion of *culture* or *civilization* to capture Islam as embodied in the societies where it has existed. He calls for a “cultural history of Islam” whereby Islam is neither a “wholly sacred enterprise” nor a “wholly secular one” but the “*mediating* space between the spiritual and the mundane”.²⁰

Esmail's association between Islam and culture may be compared with Neuhaus' earlier association between American culture and Christianity in his seminal work *The Naked Public Square*, which is widely regarded as one of the intellectual foundations of American conservatism. Neuhaus argued that the marginalisation of religion in American public life had resulted in a "naked public square", meaning that Americans had been cut off from what he considers as the moral foundations of social and political life. Neuhaus' association between culture and religion was based on the assumption that religion and culture are inextricably linked with each other. "Religion is the heart of culture and culture is the form of religion," wrote Neuhaus.²¹ For him, religion should be understood "comprehensively", encompassing "not just those ideas and activities and attitudes that we ordinarily call religious, but all the ways we think and act and interact with respect to what we believe is ultimately true and important."²²

Arguably Esmail's and Neuhaus' notions of culture and how they are related to religion are different. In addition, their aims are considerably divergent, at least insofar as politics is concerned. Neuhaus was providing legitimation for a nascent politically-oriented conservative movement, whereas Esmail and other Ismaili writers, as indicated above, are generally suspicious of the involvement of religion in politics. However, it is clear from the writings of Neuhaus and Esmail that both authors argue for a greater presence for religion in the public sphere through the medium of culture.

Culture as a Mediator for Religion into the Public Sphere

As mentioned above, secularism defines itself against religion and aims to contain it within a designated social and cognitive space. Culture, on the other hand, enjoys far greater legitimacy and recognition within a secularist framework, especially in the age of late modernity in which having or expressing a cultural identity is recognized as a basic social fact and an essential human right. Whereas in contemporary secular societies large sections of the population have no religious identification or profess no religious beliefs, it is hardly imaginable to think of a person without a cultural identity and it is hardly plausible to speak of a de-cultured public sphere. It is true that in every society (even in liberal democracies) some public cultural expressions might be repressed, but very few groups or individuals, if any, speak of suppressing or containing culture in its totality (unlike religion).

Some religious groups are consequently capitalising on the legitimacy of culture to claim greater representation or defend their symbols in the public sphere. This can be illustrated by a ruling from the European Court of Human Rights in 2011 that hanging crucifixes in classrooms in state schools in Italy does not violate the principle of the secularity of the state, because the crucifix is a “historical and cultural symbol” possessing an “identity-linked value” for Italians.²³ Indeed, religion, when framed in cultural terms, can be tolerated or even identified with by staunch atheists. Richard Dawkins, the renowned biologist and atheist activist, has described himself on a number of occasions as a “cultural Christian”²⁴ or “cultural Anglican”.²⁵ Certainly the line between culture and religion cannot be drawn easily and is subject to contestation, but this is exactly what religious groups are taking advantage of. Religious groups are pushing the boundaries of religion beyond the limited sense which secularism has granted it by recasting what have ordinarily been characterized as religious symbols and practices in cultural terms.

Furthermore, from an ontological perspective, culture is more ‘objective’ and ‘real’ than religion insofar as the latter is primarily understood as beliefs about a ‘supernatural’ reality. Cultural items are not only symbolic, but also material. They can be touched, seen, heard, or even smelled and thus they have an objective existence of their own that is distinct from how individuals perceive them. This is perhaps why the IIS and the ISMC in their educational programs are keen to take students on field trips to places renowned for their Islamic architecture, such as Andalusia and Cairo. The idea is to encourage students to develop an attachment and an understanding of Islam as ‘embodied’ culturally instead of an abstracted, theoretical Islam, which can be subject to secular repudiations and sectarian contestations.

The contemporary Ismaili community thus places great emphasis on culture rather than theology. Culture, together with economic and social development constitute the three primary areas within which the Aga Khan Development Network, the main institutional body of the Ismaili community, works. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture operates a number of initiatives and programs in the fields of art, music and the restoration of historic buildings, with special focus on material culture, particularly architecture. Theology (in its common sense as the study of the divine, its attributes and its relationship to humans) on the other hand, is marginal in contemporary Ismaili public discourse. The IIS does publish Ismaili theological works from the Fatimid and Nizari eras (10th-13th centuries), but they do not seem to hold any theological or doctrinal

significance for contemporary Ismailis, as far as official Ismaili institutions are concerned. The aim of their publications, it seems, is to enhance Ismailis' sense of identity as a Muslim group that has made significant contributions to Islamic civilisation. In other words, their significance is primarily 'cultural' rather than 'religious' (again, insofar as these terms are defined in secular discourse).

Culture as a Means to Deconstruct Fundamentalist Notions of Islam

Culture in Ismaili discourse on religion does not only function to challenge the boundaries of religion as defined in secular discourse, but also to challenge fundamentalist understandings of Islam, according to which Ismailism is more often than not a sect that diverges from the doctrines and practices of 'original' or 'pure' Islam. Ismailis thus see Islamic fundamentalism as a potential threat to their existence and they attempt constantly to address this threat in their discourse. One of the ways in which they do so is to redefine and reinterpret Islam in cultural terms to shift focus away from notions of 'religious correctness' (in doctrine and practice) to cultural diversity.

This shift from Islam as theology, law and rituals, to Islam as culture and civilization can be seen clearly in the programs offered by the IIS and the ISMC. For example, the prospectus for the *Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities* of the IIS says that the program situates theology, law and mysticism along with literature, art and architecture within the framework of a "cultural history" of Muslim societies, which means that "religious developments will be seen as part of the development of thought and culture in Muslim societies".²⁶ The program, again according to its prospectus, attempts to reframe doctrinal and theological differences within Islam as differences in cultural and historical terms:

One of the objectives of the programme is to re-examine all explicit and implicit descriptions of Islam as a monolithic phenomenon. It will examine the dialectic of cultures whereby a variety of older, existing traditions were assimilated, transformed and synthesized, in most areas, into regional expressions of Islam.²⁷

From Islamic Studies to Social Sciences

The conceptual shift from studying Islam as a religion to studying it as a civilization or culture entails a methodological shift from Islamic and Oriental studies to cultural and social sciences, which situate meaning in the subject

rather than the text. The focus of study is thus not *Islam* as a set of beliefs, traditions and historical narratives but *Muslims* as subjects who are continuously reinterpreting and reproducing these traditions. This methodological shift is reflected in how the ISMC and the master's degree it offers are named: Institute for the Study of *Muslim* Civilisations and MA in *Muslim* Cultures.²⁸ Panjwani explicitly calls for use of the term *Muslim* instead of *Islam* or *Islamic* to highlight the role of human agency in shaping religious meaning, which in turn can lead to Muslim minorities having greater space to express their views within the context of Islam.²⁹

Conclusion

As a small yet publicly vibrant Muslim community, Ismailis are facing formidable challenges to their legitimacy, if not their own existence, from the 'East' as well as from the 'West'. They may not be the only Muslim community facing such challenges, but they are certainly one of the few communities to place great emphasis on academic work and discourse to meet them. Through their extensive investment in academia Ismailis are able to actively engage with a variety of academic discourses on religion and draw on a variety of resources (secular and religious, liberal and conservative) to claim legitimacy in the public sphere.

In their discourse, Ismailis utilize culture as a mediating concept to perform the double function of bridging the dualities of secular discourse and deconstructing essentialist understandings of Islam. Religion in secular discourse is essentially *subjective*, *imaginative* (*irreal*) and *private*, but culture (or religion when recast as culture) is *objective*, *real* and *public*. In addition, framing Islam in cultural terms, as advocated by the IIS and the ISMC, serves to defy the notion that it has a normative set of beliefs, historical narratives, and traditions, thereby presenting Ismailism as one among a plurality of equally legitimate interpretations of Islam.

Notes

¹ The points of view represented in these papers are not necessarily identical nor do they necessarily represent the 'official position' of the Ismaili community or its leadership. However, given the commonalities between them and the institutional affiliation of their authors, it is reasonable to consider them collectively as a sample of 'Ismaili academic discourse' on religion in contemporary societies.

² Needless to say, neither secularism nor fundamentalism is monolithic. Each term covers a variety of philosophies and political orientations that may diverge from each other considerably, which has prompted many authors to speak of ‘secularisms’ and ‘fundamentalisms’ (in the plural). However, for the purposes of this article, I am using both terms in the singular to indicate what is common between the varieties of secularism and fundamentalism respectively.

³ Quoted in Hayat Salam, ed., *Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, (Geneva: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 1990), 24-25.

⁴ German philosopher Jürgen Habermas made similar critiques of secularism in his paper calling for a more reflexive brand of secularism (hence his notion of *post-secularity*). Jürgen Habermas, “An Awareness of What is Missing,” in *An Awareness of What is missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-secular Age*, Habermas et al. (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 15-23.

⁵ Karim H. Karim and Faiza Hirji, “Religion and State in a Pluralist Nation: Policy Challenges in Contemporary Canadian Society,” The Institute of Ismaili Studies (2009) <http://www.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/pdf/Religion%20and%20State%20in%20a%20Pluralist%20Nation.pdf> (accessed 16 October 2013)

⁶ Farid Panjwani, “Because my religion says so: Democratic theory and Internal Diversity in Religions,” in *Muslim-Jewish Dialogue in a 21st Century World*, Humayun Ansari and David Cesarani, eds., (London: Centre for Minority Studies, History Department, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2007).

⁷ The majority of Ismailis live in Syria, Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, which have all witnessed civil and political strife involving religion in the past few decades.

⁸ Aryn B Sajoo, “The Ethics of the Public Square: A Preliminary Muslim Critique.” The Institute of Ismaili Studies (2007) http://www.iis.ac.uk/view_article.asp?ContentID=108977 (accessed 27 October 2013).

⁹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (California: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Talal Asad, “Thinking about the Secular Body, Pain, and Liberal Politics,” *Cultural Anthropology* 26.4 (2011): 657-675, 660.

¹¹ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 194, emphasis in original.

¹² Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

¹³ Jose Casanova, “Public Religions Revisited” in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. Hent De Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 101-119.

¹⁴ Peter L. Berger was one of the most prominent theorists of the secularization thesis in the 1960s before recanting it completely and becoming one of its staunchest critics. Richard John Neuhaus also went through a radical change of heart during the same period. From a progressive Lutheran clergyman actively involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s, he turned gradually to the Right, following the liberalization of abortion laws in the USA in the early 1970s. Berger and Neuhaus co-authored numerous books and worked together in a number of influential American journals and think-tanks concerned with religion and public affairs over a period of more than three decades.

¹⁵ As I did not have access to this book at the time of writing this paper, I am using the writings of Richard John Neuhaus which refer to this book to present its ideas.

¹⁶ Theodore M. Kerrine and Richard John Neuhaus, "Mediating structures: A paradigm for democratic pluralism," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 446, no. 1 (1979): 10-18.

¹⁷ Quoted in Salam, *Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, 23-26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 204-206.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25-26, emphasis in original.

²¹ Richard J. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1984), 132.

²² *Ibid.*, 27. Karim and Hirji have used Neuhaus' notion of the "naked public square" to argue that "a country's culture cannot be completely separated from its religious heritage" no matter how much conscious efforts are made to "de-sacralize" it. Karim and Hirji, "Religion and State in a Pluralist Nation," 1-2.

²³ "Court backs Italy in school crucifix dispute," Human Rights Europe (2011), <http://www.humanrightseurope.org/2011/03/court-backs-italy-in-school-crucifix-dispute/> (Accessed 13 June 2014).

²⁴ "Dawkins: I'm a cultural Christian" BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_politics/7136682.stm (Accessed 14 June 2014).

²⁵ "Richard Dawkins Loses Debate Against Former Anglican Head Rowan Williams at Cambridge University," The Christian Post, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/richard-dawkins-loses-debate-against-former-anglican-head-rowan-williams-at-cambridge-university-full-video-89364/> (Accessed 14 June 2014).

²⁶ "The Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (2013-2016): Prospectus," The Institute of Ismaili Studies, <http://www.iis.ac.uk/WebAssets/Large/GPISH%20prospectus%202013-16.pdf> (Accessed 20 June 2013), 4-5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁸ See also "Master of Arts in Muslim Cultures: Prospectus 2013 Entry," The Aga Khan University (International) in the United Kingdom, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, http://www.aku.edu/collegesschoolsandinstitutes/ismc/Documents/AKU-ISMC_Prospectus_2013.pdf (Accessed 11 July 2013).

²⁹ Panjwani, "Because my religion says so: Democratic theory and Internal Diversity in Religions," 11-12.

The Role of Self-Esteem in Understanding Anti-Semitic and Islamophobic Prejudice

MARYYUM MEHMOOD

Abstract

This paper aims to understand the mechanisms by which prejudice and negative stereotyping function and, in so doing, impact the self-esteem of targets of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic prejudices. Discourses of self-esteem have been well documented in psychological literature. Numerous studies into selfhood have explored racism against African-Americans by assessing self-esteem amongst Blacks. However, there is little research on the mechanisms connecting rhetorical and physical violence resulting from prejudice, and in particular Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, to low self-esteem. The intended contribution of this research paper is its attempt to elaborate these mechanisms and use them to offer insight into self-esteem. I intend to do this through a comparative analysis of the experiences of Jews living in the Weimar Republic of the 1920s and British Muslims post-9/11. Despite the different reasoning behind both, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic prejudice may affect self-esteem in similar ways. The paper sets out to evaluate how self-esteem is managed in both cases. This is done firstly by outlining the importance of self-esteem in understanding prejudice. Secondly, the paper assesses the ‘mechanisms’ through which prejudice is expressed in its targets. Finally, the paper discusses the reasons for choosing case studies of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia to analyse the concept of prejudice, and how this manner of engaging with literature on prejudice in turn gives a nuanced perspective to discourses of both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Prejudice, Selfhood and Self-esteem

Prejudice entails “an organized predisposition to respond in an unfavorable manner toward [a group of] people” because of their affiliation with a particular group.¹ Numerous studies have explored the causes of prejudice. However, this paper is interested in shedding light on its consequences. The paper sets out to discuss two main questions. Firstly, how do targets of prejudice derive their responses? And secondly, why are we faced with such a wide range of reactions from targets?

Prejudiced behaviour is often manifested in negative categorizations and stereotypes, which can otherwise be described as a “set of beliefs about the

personal attributes of a group of people”.² The processes of prejudice are based on dialogical interactions not just between, but also *within* individuals. According to G. H. Mead an individual’s Self is comprised of two halves, the ‘I’ and the ‘me’. While the role of the ‘me’ involves a process of internalization of society’s influences, the ‘I’ entails a process or set of actions influenced by the individual’s personal or internal narratives. The ‘me’ can be seen as the agent’s “social self”, while the ‘I’ is the “part of the individual composed of narratives, which is in dialogue with the ‘me’”.³ As posited by Mead, “the ‘I’ is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the ‘me’ is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes.”⁴ From this we understand that the Self is a “process through which social experiences are permanently being incorporated into the Self (through the ‘me’) and reconstructed by the ‘I’”.⁵ In the case of negative socialization resulting from an incidence of prejudice, targeted individuals will internalize negative stereotypes that are directed towards them.

Being aware of prejudicial perceptions and negative attitudes being directed towards them or their collective can create a sense of vulnerability within a targeted individual.⁶ As such, those on the receiving end of such negative labelling can become stigmatized, causing them to feel “‘tainted’ in the eyes of others and thus discredited as a result of discrepancy between [their] virtual and actual social identity”.⁷ This stigmatization mainly results in a lowering of self-esteem or “how one evaluates the self”.⁸ Targets of prejudice will try to elevate their self-esteem and this is visible in their responses. Essentially, the targeted individual will “not only compare himself to people but will recognise that others make comparisons to him... public standing becomes his dominant goal, and *amour propre* (the passion to be regarded favourably by others) his principal motive for acting”.⁹ The opinions of others act as a “social mirror” used by targets to re-assess themselves, having “internalized and incorporated” these external views.¹⁰ As such, they will deliberately re-evaluate their self-concept in a manner that allows “stigma-related stressors to have less damaging implications for their self” and this in turn also gives way to a heightening of their self-esteem.¹¹

Numerous studies into selfhood explore racism against African Americans, often by assessing self-esteem amongst black adolescents. In other studies, self-esteem acts as an indicator in understanding the impact of racial prejudice on young children of Mexican and South-east Asian immigrant parents in

the United States.¹² The majority of these studies assessed the choices made by targeted individuals through interviews and questionnaires measuring self-esteem.¹³ In Schnittker's study of self-esteem and social assimilation of Chinese American adolescents, the findings highlighted "two paths to higher self-esteem: little cultural participation in non-Chinese neighbourhoods or high-cultural participation in largely Chinese neighbourhoods".¹⁴ Similarly, in the case of African American adolescents subjected to racial prejudice, many increased their self-esteem by either associating more with their racial identity and joining black power movements, or isolating themselves from such groups and subduing this aspect of their identity entirely.¹⁵ These findings are in line with Citrin's study, which assert that "low self-esteem can promote the acceptance of both extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing" responses amongst members of the same group subject to similar prejudice.¹⁶ Extreme reactions on both ends of the spectrum "may mirror a common psychological state... [and in each case] low self-esteem can induce a generalized disposition to extremism".¹⁷

From the above explanation it can be established that discourses of self-esteem are a fundamental tool in evaluating changes in self-concept and can aid us in reaching a better understanding of both prejudice and negative stereotyping.

Mechanisms of Prejudice

Assessing the mechanisms of prejudice relies on evaluating the various responses and reactions targets of prejudice display as a result of being stigmatized. According to Goffman, persons subjected to a specific type of stigma, e.g. based on race or gender, have very similar experiences and they internalize the stigma they face in a way that results in similar changes to their self-concept.¹⁸ Through the process of socialization, targets of prejudice internalize what is considered to be the norm and understand where they stand in relation to it. They then react accordingly, i.e. decide whether to bring themselves in line with the perceived norm, retaliate further from the norm, or deny the existence of this norm entirely. Essentially, internalising negative interactions alters (initially lowers) self-esteem, triggering a response from targeted individuals in the form of specific coping mechanisms. Despite Goffman's assertion about targets with similar experiences adapting their self-concept in similar ways, in reality, studies into the reactions of negatively

stereotyped African American children suggest no sign of a universal group response, but rather indicate “segmented paths to identity formation”.¹⁹

Gordon Allport’s examination of responses illustrates an array of reactions from targets. Allport’s typology of responses includes, “focus on the self (e.g., obsessive concern), avoidant reactions, (e.g., denial of membership, withdrawal), conforming or compliant responses (e.g., clowning, self-hate), enhanced in-group solidarity (e.g., strengthening ingroup ties, militancy), and negative orientations toward the majority group (e.g., prejudice against the outgroup), and social action (e.g., enhanced status striving).”²⁰ In light of Allport’s typology I suggest three major categories of responses: isolation, assimilation and (violent or non-violent) retaliation.

The variation in responses amongst stigmatized individuals belonging to the same group is a result of discrepancies in social situation and context.²¹ For example, the extent to which the targeted aspect of their identity is concealable would figure in an individual’s rationalization of choosing whether or not to assert it; the less obvious the identity, the greater the possibility of concealment. However, simply because it is doable, does not mean targets will inevitably choose to hide an element of their identity, as a variety of factors are involved in making the final decision.

Moreover, it is difficult to determine the extent to which choices made by targets are a result of the individual’s personal choosing or influenced by a specific group affiliation; is the individual simply ‘band-wagoning’ with the majority consensus of his community, or are his views a reflection of deeply held internal convictions?

Similarly, the economic mobility and status of a targeted individual also factors in determining their level of social and cultural integration and, ultimately, their reactions to being negatively stereotyped. Prior research has explored the influence of variations in socioeconomic status on reactions to negative stereotyping amongst African Americans. However, there is too much discrepancy in the various findings to uphold a conclusive explanation. For example, some studies of class and self-esteem amongst African Americans suggest, “heightened black perceptions of discrimination cut across socio-economic classes, connecting low-income blacks with those who earn higher incomes.”²²

In stark contrast, other studies show that a better-educated African American person is less likely than her less-educated counterpart to say that discrimination is more frequent.²³ While the specific manner in which an individual reacts is dependent on an amalgamation of life circumstances, it is apparent in each case that all targets of prejudice have experienced lowering of self-esteem, which has caused them to react in order to elevate self-esteem. Intra-group generational differences and educational disparities are also factors that affect the social and political attitudes of the members of stigmatized communities. This highlights that groups are not homogenous entities and individuals have a multitude of self-identifications which must be taken into consideration when assessing their responses. Moreover, as Allport concluded, the manner in which the target responds to prejudice is dependent very much on whether they are 'extrapunitive' (more likely to blame others), or 'intropunitive' (more likely to take blame upon themselves).²⁴ If the target happens to be extrapunitive, they will most likely display the following range of behaviour: obsessive concern and suspicion; slyness and cunning; strengthening of group ties; prejudice against other groups; aggression and revolt; stealing; competitiveness; rebellion; and enhanced striving. In contrast, if the individual is intropunitive it leads to: denial of membership in their own group; withdrawal and passivity; clowning; self-hate; in-group aggression; sympathy with all victims; symbolic status striving; and neuroticism.²⁵

Case Studies

The case studies of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia have been chosen because they are both rich in detail and, to a certain degree, can be contrasted. Both are forms of religious and racial hatred against Europe's 'other' at various points in time. On the whole, society has grown seemingly more tolerant with time. However, this does not mean prejudice no longer exists. These two cases act as a means to identify and evaluate aspects of prejudice that are universal as opposed to historically contingent.

The cases of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia illustrate how Allport's classifications and the three categories (isolation, assimilation and retaliation) explain prejudice. For instance, 'avoidant reactions' normally lead to a form of voluntary social isolation. Such reactions can be seen as a means of denial in order to maintain the self-concept of the individuals being targeted. It

results in ghettoization, whether it be Bengali Muslims in Tower Hamlets, London, or Jews in Weimar Berlin, preferring to live in their respective, tight-knit communities.

Compliant responses, which need not be as extreme as ‘self-hate’, are a means of assimilation within the mainstream. To a certain extent, this entails targets re-evaluating their internal narratives and self-identifications. In this situation targets make an attempt to assimilate in the dominant mainstream. While reactions vary, the more assertive cases entail the target denying the ‘socially unacceptable’ schema of their identity and passing themselves off as what is perceived as being ‘normal’. Prior to the formation of the Weimar Republic for instance, prominent Jewish figures had abandoned faith labels, and as such ‘Jewishness’ for them was limited to ethnicity. For example, some prominent German Jewish figures converted to Catholicism, like Lorenzo Da Ponte, or Protestantism, like Felix Mendelssohn and Victor Klemperer. It is, however, noteworthy that despite this shift in self-identification, they still experienced negative categorization and prejudice. By contrast, entirely dissociating from their religious affiliation is something that most members of the present-day Muslim diaspora living in Britain would find uncomfortable, particularly because ‘Muslim’ is not a label of ethnicity; a multitude of cultures and ethnic groups attest to being Muslim. Interestingly, ‘assimilated’ Muslims and Jews often demand recognition on the basis of a grouping other than their religious or racial heritage. For example, the youth of both groups have been at the forefront of anti-fascist and socialist movements. Joining such groups does not necessarily require completely dissociating from their Muslim or Jewish heritage and offers a constructive alternative, showing the compatibility of multiple self-identifications in an overarching identity struggle.

Another expression of assimilation occurs when targets of prejudice proclaim their localized, ‘geographical’ identity. For instance, many German Jews living in the cities of Strasbourg or Berlin in the 1920s tended to self-identify and consider their being city dwellers as their primary identity. In proclaiming their city affiliation first, they adopted a more localized, as opposed to nationalistic or religious identity. Similarly, many British Muslims, particular those who reside in major cities such as London, Liverpool or Manchester, typically identify as being first and foremost Londoners, Liverpudlians or Mancunians. It would be interesting to see how far the localization of identity has superseded the feeling of ‘Britishness’ amongst British Muslims, and how

far their choices are a result of prejudice they have faced, and what impacts, if any, this has had on their self-esteem.

By contrast, a combination of “negative orientation toward the majority group” and “enhanced in-group solidarity” increases the possibility of retaliation against society. This response takes either a subtle and non-violent, or zealous and fervent form. For instance, the failure of assimilation into wider German society served as the foundation for Theodor Herzl’s proposal, in *Der Judenstaat*, to uphold Jewish heritage and Zionism. Herzl proposed that it was inevitable for Jews to be “naturally drawn into those places where [they] are not persecuted, and [their] appearance there gives rise to persecution”.²⁶ For this reason, he asserted that the only viable political solution to the “Jewish question” was the establishment of a Jewish homeland outside Europe. Similarly, the current rampant Islamophobia in Western countries, particularly the UK, has led some young Muslims to call for a revival of the *Ummah* (transnational Muslim brotherhood). In such cases, the reaction towards perpetual prejudice might entail the “adoption of Islam as an oppositional identity”.²⁷ Moreover, as previously touched upon, considering that the category of ‘Muslims’ is not ethnic but ideology-based, young dissenters will often “attempt to appropriate an Islam that is separate from the ethnic culture of the parental generation”.²⁸ In this way, the collective consciousness is heightened as a direct response to being socially marginalized and rejected.²⁹ In the case of targets of Islamophobia, experiences of faith-based discrimination and stigmatization have led to “reactive religiosity”, which might involve a visible assertion of religion in the public space, e.g. headscarf or full face veils adopted by Muslim women in Western countries.³⁰ Such responses have caused the politicization of religious items of clothing as a form of retaliation and a demand to be accepted as a member of a particular faith group. This situation has been exacerbated following the ‘War on Terror’ in the Middle East. In such cases, associating with groups promoting this favourable aspect and particular interpretation of identity increases self-esteem by enabling a more definitive and robust sense of self-concept.

It is important to consider how far each of these responses is a result of the personal preference of the targeted individual as opposed to the influence of their group affiliation and loyalty. As previously discussed, the extent to which the socio-economic status and generational and educational differences

amongst people of the same ethno-religious groups figure in the decision-making process is also well worth investigating.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight the importance of including the discourse of self-esteem in the study of prejudice. Firstly, the paper began by developing an understanding of prejudice and its impact upon selfhood. The importance of self-esteem narratives in exploring the concept of prejudice was then discussed. Gordon Allport's typology of prejudice was used to examine the mechanisms of prejudice through an exploration of the variety of reactions displayed by targets as a result of being negatively stereotyped. The paper highlighted that both the personal convictions and group affiliations of the target influence the choice of response made by the individual. Similarly, the socioeconomic status, age and level of education of the targeted individual also figure into the decision-making process. Finally, this paper discussed the specific case studies of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and used them as a means to analyse the concept of prejudice, showing how this manner of engaging with literature on prejudice offers a better understanding of both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Notes

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³ George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, vols. 1-3, Charles W. Morris, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 178.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵ Carreira da Silva, *G. H. Mead: A critical introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 6.

⁶ Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson, "Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans," *Journal of Personality and Psychology* 69, 5 (November, 1995): 799.

⁷ Erving Goffman, *Stigma* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), 12.

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⁹ Richard Ned Lebow, "Identity and the Self," in Michael, T. Gibbons, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought* (London: Wiley, 2015), 3.

- ¹⁰ Hulya Kosar Altinyelken, "Migration and Self-Esteem: A Qualitative Study Among Internal Migrant Girls in Turkey," *Adolescence* 44, 173 (Spring 2009): 151.
- ¹¹ Jennifer Crocker, Brenda Major, C. Steele, "Social Stigma" in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed. D Gilbert, S T Fiske, & G Lindzey (Boston: McGraw, 1998), 505.
- ¹² Min Zhou, "Growing Up American: The Challenge Confronting Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 63-95.
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- ¹⁵ Judith R. Porter and Robert E. Washington, "Minority Identity and Self-Esteem," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 139-161.
- ¹⁶ Paul M. Snider and Jack Citrin, "Psychological Sources of Political Belief: Self-Esteem and Isolationist Attitudes," *The American Political Science Review* 65, 2 (1971): 411.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 411.
- ¹⁸ Erving Goffman, *Stigma*, 32-40.
- ¹⁹ Ruben G. Rumbaut, "The Crucible within Ethnic Identity, Self-Esteem, and Segmented Assimilation among Children of Immigrants," *International Migration Review*, 28, 4, (1994): 748.
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- ²¹ John, F. Dovidio, Brenda Major & Jennifer Crocker, "Stigma: introduction and overview," in Todd F. Heatherton, Robert E. Kleck, Michelle R. Hebl and Jay G. Hull, eds., *The Social Psychology of Stigma* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 1-28.
- ²² Russell K. Robinson, "Perceptual Segregation," *Columbia Law Review* 108, 5 (2008): 1113.
- ²³ Pew Research Ctr. Report, *supra* note 65, at 32 ("Fully three-quarters of all blacks who have graduated from college say blacks often face racism when applying for jobs, a view expressed by about six-in-ten (61%) blacks with a high school degree or less."), found in Russell K. Robinson, "Perceptual Segregation," *Columbia Law Review* 108, 5 (2008): 1113.
- ²⁴ Gordon Allport (1979), *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 145.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.
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Secularism, Reason and Religion

FARRAH RAZA

Abstract

The human right to religion or belief has a complex relationship with secularism at the constitutional level and permissible reasons in the political sphere. The focus of this paper is an exploration of the relationship between secular based reasons and the right to religion or belief. The law on religious freedom is influenced by various historical, cultural, political and social factors and this includes the type of reasons considered to be permissible in the public sphere. The first section outlines the link between secularism, reasoning and the right to religion or belief. The second section cites the legal sources for the right to religion or belief. The third section briefly analyses the issues relating to the concept of public reason in the context of religion. The fourth section assesses the reasons in case law on religious symbols. The focus is not on the outcomes of the case law but on the reasons provided and the process of adjudication on religion or belief, which are used to demonstrate how human rights are influenced by public reason and secularism. The fifth section concludes the essay, and suggests that a narrow view of permissible reasons in the public domain has the potential to limit the freedom of religion or belief. 'Reasoning' is used in the sense of public reason and specifically of arguments for law and policy that have some religious-based sources or reasons.

Introduction

For the purposes of this paper, the debate on public reason will be contextualized within the discourse on the role of religion in the public sphere. This is because debates on law and religion often concern the extent to which religion should influence law and policy. The late John Rawls' theory on public reason has stimulated an abundance of discussion on which types of reasons or arguments ought to be permissible in the public sphere. These debates form a springboard for analysing the implications of public reason for religious freedom. Therefore, public reason will not be discussed in the abstract ideal but within the reality of legal debates on the right to religion or belief. A state that considers the rights of minorities seriously would need to consider the implications of its 'permissible public reason' for its minorities. Restricting forms of reasoning can result in a form of censorship and thereby limit freedom of expression and religious freedom, which are inter-dependent to the extent that religious freedom is a form of expression.

Representatives of religious organizations often comment or contribute to public debate. For example, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, criticized the policies of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition on 'big society' and welfare reform.

Prime Minister David Cameron responded by disagreeing with the comments made but stated that, "I think the Archbishop of Canterbury is entirely free to express political views. I have never been one to say that the Church should fight shy of making political interventions."¹ In this way, public reason can be relevant to political, religious and legal institutions. The proportionality test, as employed by judges in human rights cases, particularly in cases on religion or belief, engages the judiciary in a form of public reasoning. The case law on religion or belief merits further exploration as the balancing of various considerations in a case demonstrates the link between secularism, reasoning and religious freedom. The question of religious-based reasoning appears in the case law on religion or belief (although for clarity it should be emphasized that the cases do not explicitly address public reason or religious-based reasoning). However, it is clear that cases concerning religious freedom inherently concern public reason because they engage religious reasons which have to be balanced against other considerations and rights.

The Right to Religion or Belief

In this paper, religious freedom is a broad term used to cover the various legal techniques that protect the right to religion or belief in European law. Religious freedom is protected under both European human rights law and anti-discrimination law. The human right to religion or belief is protected by Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Article 9 states that:

Article 9

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.
2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.²

Under European Union anti-discrimination law, religion or belief is one of the protected characteristics. The concept of indirect discrimination is particularly relevant as it seeks to address laws that are facially neutral but which might have discriminatory effects. Section 19 of the Equality Act 2010 states that indirect discrimination occurs when:

(1) A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if A applies to B a provision, criterion or practice which is discriminatory in relation to a relevant protected characteristic of B's.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), a provision, criterion or practice is discriminatory in relation to a relevant protected characteristic of B's if —

(a) A applies, or would apply, it to persons with whom B does not share the characteristic,

(b) it puts, or would put, persons with whom B shares the characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared with persons with whom B does not share it,

(c) it puts, or would put, B at that disadvantage, and

(d) A cannot show it to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.³

Article 9 is structured in a manner that requires public reason (Article 9 (2)) to take precedence over internal, religious reasoning (Article 9 (1)). That is why the source or form of reasoning can be relevant to religious freedom; public reason is not only relevant to the public domain and political institutions, but also has a role to play in the right to religion or belief.

The justification for indirect discrimination also requires a proportionate measure. The test of proportionality is relevant to the extent to which a manifestation of a religious belief is permissible. An individual's legal right to religion or belief, or protection from discrimination, is dependent on the way in which the tests of indirect discrimination and proportionality are reasoned. The reasons provided for the cause of action taken, for example, a request for exemption from a particular activity at work or to amend working hours, are particularly important for the objective justification stage of the indirect discrimination test. Proportionality is a structured legal test that requires the judges to ascertain the relevant factors in the case. The relevant

factors in a case are determined by the facts. However even at this stage, there can be scope for judges to make evaluative choices, or the facts might require choices to be made.

Public Reason and Religion

John Rawls' theory of justice, including his conception of public reason, is one of the most influential contemporary liberal theories. Rawls argues that 'public reason' is part of a democracy because democracies have reasonable pluralism where there are various conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines.⁴ Rawls' argument is that, "if a law is based on a particular 'comprehensive doctrine' it necessarily breaches respect for freedom and equality because some citizens will be subject to a comprehensive doctrine that they do not share, and therefore, the reasons must be 'political' not comprehensive."⁵ One of the central advantages of Rawls' idea of political liberalism is that it purports to be impartial between different reasonable comprehensive doctrines (religious or non-religious).⁶

Rawls' theory has faced various criticisms, despite his later work in which he sought to address some of the criticisms. Commentators have questioned the neutrality and fairness of Rawls' theory. Arguably, the secular bias of public reason obviously places religious arguments at a disadvantage. Wolterstorff points out that restrictions on religious reasons are unfair because comprehensive secular perspectives are more difficult to detect, in comparison to religious reasoning which is often based on a scripture (for example the Old and New Testaments or the Quran).⁷ Given the weight and depth of beliefs in people's lives, it should be no surprise that the comprehensive views of citizens, whether religious or not, permeate a range of human activities which are potentially covered by the right to religion or belief. Jamal acknowledges that, "our deeply held beliefs are probably where we will look for our sense of the good life."⁸

The issues raised by public reason are relevant to the right to religion or belief because religion or belief cases are often generated by a claim based on religious reasons or sources. Furthermore, case law also reveals that a secular court often has to adjudicate and/or engage with religiously-based doctrines or practices, such as in the *Jewish Free School* case.⁹

Religious Freedom

An exclusivist version of public reason places a number of religious practices under heightened scrutiny, which increases the loss of legal protection. This problem is more acute when religious practices do not raise obvious medical and health concerns (for example, cases on circumcision where there is medical disagreement on the benefits or drawbacks of male circumcision). The scrutiny of practices that raise health and related concerns is to be welcomed (for example, a restriction on the wearing of a cross might be unnecessary if the reasoning is solely that it is a religious symbol but not in the case where it raises health or hygiene concerns).¹⁰

But in the absence of clear health or safety concerns, religion or belief practices are subject to complex reasoning. The concept of proportionality requires some engagement with reasonable options and alternatives. According to Rawls, “political liberalism does not attack or criticize any reasonable view.”¹¹ However, the idea of “reasonable” needs further examination to see whether political liberalism can be neutral towards different comprehensive views. The question of reasonable views is relevant to religious freedom because the legal validity of certain religious or cultural practices can be subject to pressure for their ‘reasonableness’. The issue of reasonableness is highlighted by debates on circumcision, the niqab and ritual slaughtering, as well as views on ethics and sexual ethics; specifically in the context of abortion, euthanasia, sex education, contraception and other medical procedures. Cases on religious clothing have raised various concerns about the meaning of religious symbols, and how their display can be perceived as a form of imposition on others.¹²

Azmi v. Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council concerned a case of a teaching assistant who was employed as a bi-lingual support worker and wanted to wear a full face veil at work.¹³ Her subjective religious obligation and the reasoning for her obligation can be viewed as inaccessible to others. However, this is a necessary part of holding a belief, which excludes those who do not subscribe to it. Furthermore, acts of male circumcision or fasting can be viewed as ‘irrational’ from external perspectives. Similarly, practices of non-Abrahamic, non-traditional or new religious faiths could also be viewed with the same degree of scepticism.

The courts are often willing to insulate religious practices from external

pressure to some extent by accepting the subjective value to the individual right bearer. However, in some cases this has not been the approach across the board because of the form of secularism a state favours. In *Leyla Sahin*, the applicant lost her challenge to wear a headscarf at university; the historical and secular constitutional arrangements of Turkey were weighty factors considered by the court.¹⁴ The form of public reason therefore influenced the extent to which a religious practice, in this case, religious dress, could be accommodated. Whereas, in *Shabina Begum* the court considered the internal perspective of minority views within a religion and engaged with the religious belief of the applicant with less hesitation. Lady Hale pointed out, “The sight of a woman in full purdah may offend some people, and especially those... who believe that it is a symbol of her oppression, but that could not be a good reason for prohibiting her from wearing it.”¹⁵ The judgment in *Shabina Begum* is a contrast to other judgements on the headscarf and Muslim women’s dress, partly because of the differing forms of secularism across European states. Secular reasoning can often mediate between different religious perspectives or impose a solution despite the question of legitimacy or the ability to mediate internal religious conflicts. Rivers asserts: “If a religious believer can demonstrate a commitment to a religious precept with sufficient coherence and cogency, the court can ‘rely’ on that reason in the sense of recognising its power in the life of the believer, and securing the right of the believer to act on that reason.”¹⁶ However, if religious reasons are viewed as inherently irrational and inaccessible, weight need not be attached at the proportionality stage.

Conclusion

There are a number of conclusions to be drawn from the discussion above. The exclusion of religious-based reasons in the public arena has various consequences for legal and political issues. Furthermore, the practical reality is that minority groups, which include minority religious groups, often feel marginalized and face barriers and discrimination. Therefore, in order to fully engage minority groups, it is helpful to encourage an open forum which includes various perspectives. This approach can foster integration in addition to achieving better workable law and policy. Not only can legitimacy be enhanced but there is a higher chance of enriching intellectual debates on coercive laws, freedom and equality. Jamal asserts that: “We may be more divided than the Rawlsian liberal position suggested because we are divided even about what fairness means,” and therefore “have to embrace a greater

and more raucous polyphony than liberalism may have imagined”.¹⁷ Waldron argues that it is the opposite of wisdom to “ignore the contents of all religious conceptions of the person” and to dismiss religious or controversial sources that could actually have the potential to contribute to ideas of virtue and value.¹⁸

There are now such a broad range of comprehensive doctrines, such as vegetarianism, Marxism or Christianity, that it is difficult to place limits on the way they can influence policy or the members of the public. There are numerous challenges that an open version of the public forum presents, but we should be concerned about excluding forms of reason because of the effect it can have on individual liberty due to the constraining effect on the right to religion or belief – a right that is accessible to all, both the religious and non-religious. This paper seeks to make a modest contribution to the debate on public reason by assessing its interaction with forms of secularism and religious freedom and by arguing that a narrow form of public reason has the potential to curtail individual rights. This concern is legitimate regardless of the specific constitutional set up of the state, whether a liberal democracy or a state influenced by religion, because the risk of censoring views based on comprehensive doctrines, risks limiting (certain) manifestations of those comprehensive doctrines.

Notes

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⁵ Jonathan Chaplin, “Law, Religion and Public Reasoning,” *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 1, 2 (2009): 319-337.

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- ⁹ *R (E) v Governing Body of JFS* [2009] UKSC 15.
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Feminist Subversions of the Hijab among British Muslim Women

PINA SADAR

Abstract

The focus of this paper lies in exploring the emancipatory rhetoric of the Islamic veil (the hijab) as observed among Muslim women in contemporary Britain. The research delves into semiotic subversions of the veil and its potential for transforming into a catalyst for social negotiation through which subaltern voices gain the possibility to partake in feminist and democratic debates. Rather than viewing the veil as a rigid structure that is imposed on an individual, feminist readings of the hijab accentuate the power of female agency to revisit, appropriate and alter hegemonic meanings. The paper argues that the hijab represents a conspicuous part of novel social movements that are resisting Western and male gender normativity and are inspiring new versions of feminism in the realm of Islamic values. Based upon an ethnographic study conducted among British Muslim women, this research combines emic perspectives of respondents with fragments from media and social media texts.

A young woman steps onto the stage. Her strong voice fills the place and her sharp, politically-loaded words pierce through the hall and the minds of the audience. She is wearing glittery shoes, oversized purple glasses, a bow tie... and the *hijab*. Her name is Amerah, she is a spoken word poet and she is one of many representatives of a young generation of British Muslim activists who are promoting voices and rights of Muslim women and mobilizing their visibility in public. Especially evidently present in artistic movements and on various social media platforms, novel feminist discourses deconstruct the hegemonic image of a 'veiled woman' and explore alternative avenues for imagining the Islamic veil, as well as gender roles, in the context of Islam and British consumerism. Based upon a 10-month ethnographic study conducted among British Muslim women, this paper brings forth female voices and highlights emic perceptions on the role of the *hijab* in feminist agendas. Alongside exploring various mainstream media and social media, the subjective accounts of Muslim women are analyzed through wider discussions on feminism, post-colonialism and symbolism from a perspective of social anthropology.

Fuelled with media and political preoccupation with the subject, the Islamic veil holds the status of one of the most controversial sartorial items of contemporary British milieu.¹ Originally concomitant with spirituality and modesty, it has in recent decades transformed into a powerful political insignia that is challenging relations between religion, gender, nationality and ethnicity in a variety of diverse and often conflicting amalgamations. Following the post-9/11 war on terror and the subsequent demonization of Muslims in the West, the controversies regarding the Islamic headgear have become especially vocal in the Euro-American context. Recent public discussions in Britain are commonly framed into Huntington's problematic 'clash of civilizations'² paradigm and are focusing on the alleged incompatibility of the veil and Western values of modernity, emancipation and secularism.

As a result of inflexibly outlined dichotomies, the veil is commonly subjected to leftist critiques and regularly proclaimed as the ultimate emblem of unwelcome British otherness by conservatives and progressive feminists alike. These critiques commonly perceive the veil as a rigid signifier with a strictly determined meaning. From distorted colonial representations of Oriental women to propaganda imagery supporting Western interventions in Muslim lands, the veil has been portrayed in a curiously static fashion.³ These partial and often erroneous representations equate a 'veiled woman' with on one hand a passive victim of patriarchal oppression and on the other hand an active threat to Western security and identity, be it in the context of colonial imperialism or contemporary British citizenship. Whilst the centuries-long Western collective memory considers the veil to be a stagnant symbol of female oppression and terror, Frantz Fanon famously acknowledges historic dynamisms of the veil.⁴ He sees the Islamic veil as an unstable symbolic concept and illustrates this notion with the example of the Algerian revolution during the period of French colonialism and their mission to unveil Algeria.

The full body veil (*niqab*) became a "mechanism of resistance" as the Algerian female revolutionists were trading on their expected status as passive apolitical figures while smuggling the weapons dressed as either French girls or concealing the weapon beneath their *niqabs*.⁵ Subsequently, a material item that was supposedly repressing female freedom and obscuring their access to public political life became exploited to literally gain access to the public sphere and the fight for freedom. This example illustratively deconstructs firm

binaries that are so commonly embroidered into the metaphoric fabric of the veil. East-West, traditional-modern, private-public and Other-Self dichotomies are collapsed, thus introducing the *hijab* as a fluid, agonized and hybrid signifier open to contestations, within which women negotiate, appropriate and alter its meaning(s).

This fluidity is significant when addressing the on-going issue of gender segregation that is commonly found on the agendas of British media and politicians. Islamic social identification of men and women to gender-specific sites,⁶ with male places shaping the public realm and the female ones being located in the domain of the private, is subjected to harsh criticism premised on its being equated with sexual apartheid.⁷ Emancipatory readings of the *hijab* – as well as its more orthodox counterparts: the *niqab* or the *burqa* – provide an opposing outlook. “Many Brits think that because of gender segregation Islam is patriarchal and that women who respect it are necessarily brainwashed,” states Fatima, an activist and a *niqab*-wearer from East London, adding: “It, however, simply allows us to maintain desired privacy.” Through the eyes of Fatima and many other Muslim women, gender segregation manifested in the veil is hence seen as an institution that is empowering women rather than subjectifying them. The veil enables an adherent to avoid surveillance; women themselves are governing social interactions by deploying the veil to regulate male gazes.⁸

The veil has moreover a potential to function as ‘portable seclusion’⁹ or a ‘mobile home’.¹⁰ By concealing her body, a woman creates a space that is maintaining her preferred habitat located in a private domain whilst moving around the public space; she is crossing the boundaries of her physical private space without really transcending the boundaries of her symbolic private space. This idea is apparent in the case of British Muslim women who mostly do not perceive the veil as an obstacle to their participation in public life but rather as a social instrument enabling them to be loyal to Islamic values whilst partaking in various public events and roles. A London-based chef Emily, for instance, talks about getting a fire-proof *hijab* as a substitute for a required hat in a restaurant. A teenager Manizha shows her ‘burkini’, a swimsuit adhering to the Islamic dress code, which enables her to swim in public pools and beaches, while Amina works as a shop assistant in a big British franchise and wears a Muslim version of an official staff uniform that comes with the *hijab*.

These examples refute that the veil is a device for limiting women's physical and symbolic space. They also demonstrate that Habermasian division between public and private spheres is historically contingent;¹¹ normative European notions of private and public are not applicable to Islamic modes of space division, thus emphasizing a major lacuna in Western feminists' critique about the exclusive limitation of Muslim women to the private sphere. Following common feminist criticism that highlights the supposed incompatibility of Western and Islamic conceptions of gender, a number of Muslim women categorically dismiss feminism altogether, claiming that its basic principles cannot be applied alongside Islamic dogma. "Feminism and Islam is an oxymoron," for example firmly states Rashida, a recent social sciences graduate from Newcastle. She furthermore claims that Islam is in its essence favorable to women; being a good Muslim automatically dictates the respecting of women and securing gender equality.

However, the incompatibility of Islam and feminism is a heavily contested subject that has been revisited by numerous activists and scholars. For instance, a self-declared Muslim feminist Neda critiques the notion of Islam being inherently feminist. In her blog post, she emphasizes that simply being a Muslim does not satisfactorily enhance women's rights, highlighting that such rhetoric simply normalizes "injustices happening in our countries, mosques, and homes."¹² Just like Muslims continue to resist unbalanced power systems in the case of poverty through mandating charity, the plight for gender rights should be subjected to the same treatment. Islam should not only give "women egalitarian platforms" but also simultaneously fight to dismantle the existing patriarchy."¹³

This idea has been vigorously adopted by burgeoning online movements that utilize social media channels as platforms for addressing gender inequalities in society, especially within Islamic communities. The growing popularity of online Muslim feminist activism has been recently exhibited in the form of a trending Twitter hashtag *#lifeofamuslimfeminist*. Manchester-born Noorulann who initiated this progressively popular movement explains: "Essentially the hashtag began with me trying to explain the frustrations I faced as a Muslim feminist – navigating between Muslims telling you that you don't need feminism and mainstream feminism rejecting you. When this happens, there is nowhere you can position yourself comfortably."¹⁴ Her idea snowballed and now features thousands of 140-character long texts narrating main challenges and aspirations of Muslim feminists, which commonly

involves the topic of wearing the *hijab*. “If only men obsessed over the education, health and justice of Muslim women like they obsess over *hijab*,” complains one of the women, whilst another user objects to “getting lectures on how your *hijab* isn’t ‘correct’ by brothers who clearly missed the memo about lowering their gaze.” By publically discussing veils with regards to men’s double standards and male control over women’s dress, the women reassert their right to shape and transform the dominant meanings of the veil. Myriam, a student from the North East of England, echoes this claim: “I’m tired of everyone telling me how to dress and what is correct or not correct. It is women who wear it and it should be women who decide why and how to wear it. We should seek guidance from the Quran but we don’t need to listen to any sexist Islamic scholar.”

This idea is capitalized on by Muslim queer movements. They resist the symbolic connection between the veil and narrowly defined gender normativity and celebrate the veil as the emblem of female inclusivity. “*Hijabs & [b]urqas* are part of a Muslim lesbian/bisexual/queer woman’s identity,” recently tweeted the Safra Project, a British NGO focusing on sexuality and gender in Islam and in particular on LBTQ Muslim women and radical feminism. The organization is confronting gender biases that are prevalent in Muslim laws and campaigning for inclusive and reformed gender roles in Islam. Safra, however, is aware that their attitude is not commonly accepted and shared. While strong criticism is generated by the majority Muslim population, similar exclusion is even exercised by non-Muslim queers as well. Tamsila, an activist and a founder of the project, describes a negative experience which occurred at a recent Gay Pride Parade: “We were harassed and assaulted by some gay men with Islamophobic, racist and misogynistic abuse and had beer thrown at us. No one from the march intervened; in fact others stood by and encouraged the abusers in their actions.”¹⁵ Similar stories are not a rarity, with social media channels exposing analogous anecdotes of Muslim homosexual women being told off during various queer events on the basis of their attire. These experiences indicate how the *hijab* is commonly equated with the limited perceptions of gender roles in Islam, both within the Islamic community and by the majority Britons – even those who are often subjected to similar discriminatory treatment themselves.

The *hijab* is not only utilized to revisit Islamic gender roles but is simultaneously deployed as a political mechanism to resist hegemonic gender roles in contemporary Britain. As a response to nascent objectification of

women and their bodies, the *hijab* can become “an empowering tool of resistance.”¹⁶ By repelling the sexualization of female bodies by covering them, women gain a sense of self-worth without adhering to the “capitalist culture’s beauty game.”¹⁷ In that sense, the veil transcends a solely religious dimension and becomes explicitly political. Such a position is exemplified by the researcher and publicist Nadiya who donned the *hijab* after delving into feminism during her studies. She remarks: “Though my mode of expression may appear Islamic, and my experiences carry a spiritual dimension, there is no theological monopoly on women’s empowerment; I really believe that a non-Muslim woman could do this if she chose to.”¹⁸ Rather than protecting herself from men’s lust, she employs the *hijab* to announce that her “femininity is not available for public consumption.”¹⁹

The above-mentioned examples highlight the two-flux process of creating the meaning in which the semiotics of the *hijab* continues to be largely dependent on “contemporary political events and their media coverage, as well as through the actions and campaigns of *hijab* wearers.”²⁰ While hegemonic British political and media discourses might represent the veil as the symbol of centuries-long oppression and a tool of an institutionalized patriarchy, the *hijab* remains open to semiotic subversions facilitated by its adherents themselves. Rather than viewing it as a rigid structure that is imposed on an individual, feminists recognize and build upon semiotic potentials of the veil for subverting dominant meanings, thus welcoming it as a conspicuous insignia for channeling voices of the subaltern.²¹ By resisting male hegemony, narrowly-defined gender identities or capitalist modes of objectifying female bodies, the veil represents a new version of feminism that is embodying emancipation without conforming to Western gender normativity or refuting Islamic values.

Though such interpretations of Islamic veiling are generating controversies and a significant proportion of British Muslim women might indeed disagree with feminist implications of the veil, these numerous alternative understandings emphasize an important notion: just as in the case of any other symbol, the connection between the veil and its meaning is “in the causal sense always arbitrary.”²² It is hence impossible to insist on a single interpretation of the *hijab* according to the dominant definitions of gender roles and expectations. Instead, it is essential to acknowledge the subjective nature of the *hijab* which continues to leave it open to social manipulations by individuals and different socio-cultural contexts.²³ Subsequently, the

connotations of the veil are consistently subjected to dynamic alternations through time and space and reflect the norms and values within certain cultural circles, including their omnipresent metamorphoses.

Moreover, the veil cannot be observed as a simple item of material culture that is solely 'documenting' the societal conditions in a certain cultural context. Analogous to any other item of clothing, the veil can be seen as part of a complex 'language'²⁴ that is deployed for communicating purposeful messages, including those of resistance. By being physically located on the border between the intimate body (the self) and the public environment (culture), the veil functions as a particularly rich and informing social system that is not only constituted by but also constitutive of various cultural categories.²⁵ As such, it can be an effective mechanism for facilitating social mobilizations, with feminist movements being an especially illustrative example of that. As British Muslim activists, artists, homosexuals and intellectuals incorporate the veil in their everyday sartorial practices, their *hijabs* turn into powerful visual symbols that announce their own right to define the meanings of being British, Muslim, a woman and a *hijabi*.

As demonstrated by the women introduced in this paper, continuous and ritual acts of resistance which are materialized in their outfits "fashion a new structure of categories," which reorganize the pre-existing relationships. Through the theoretical prism of Levi-Strauss²⁶ and Hebdige,²⁷ Muslim feminists' utilization of the veil corresponds to the concept of a bricolage. Women take particular objects with sedimented meanings and re-order them entirely. They relocate the veil out of the prevailing semiotic domain of female oppression, heteronormativity and counter-modernity into a novel total ensemble, thus generating a different discourse with a new set of messages. The most vocal of these messages is certainly one that is accentuating the significance of female agency and women's freedom to fabricate and channel their own version of the *hijab* – whatever it may be.

Notes

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‘Vienna must not become Istanbul’: The Secularization of Islam and Muslims in Austria

ZSOLT SEREGHY

Abstract

By tapping into fears over continuing immigration from Muslim countries and a perceived loss of ‘Austrianness’, from the mid-2000s the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) identified ‘radical Islam’ and Muslim immigrants as the greatest threats penetrating both Austria and the ‘Christian West’, introducing the ‘Islamic card’ to Austrian politics. What is of interest regarding Austria is that even though Islam and Muslims have only been uttered as a societal threat by a single right-wing political force, this view seems to be hardly contested by society as a whole and is shared by far-rightists as well as liberal politicians and many intellectuals. Also, with Europe’s earliest legislation dating back to 1912 that recognizes Islam on equal footing and governs its followers in an unprecedentedly integrative manner, the situation is even more puzzling. Contending that discourses framing Islam and practices governing Muslims in Austria securitize the religion and its followers, this study identifies relevant securitizing discourses in the print media and of the political élite in order to understand how this assumed securitization of Islam and Muslims has become possible. Also, to account for the relationship between uniquely early liberal legislation governing Islam vis-à-vis the Alpine republic’s strong tradition of populist right-wing politics, and the more recent spread of anti-Islamic sentiments – which is argued to be disconnected – it is crucial to look at how underlying narrative contexts, in which the analyzed discourses are embedded, – e.g. cultural memory, narratives of national identity – inform these discourses and facilitate the inter-subjective understanding of the threat-utterance between securitizing actors and their receptive audiences.

Background

While during the 1960s immigration was a source of ‘content’ in Western Europe, more recently it has increasingly been framed as a source of discontent, fear and instability.¹ According to Sniderman,² the consequences of this radical shift can be identified in two structural characteristics that have developed in Europe since the 1980s: 1) a deep strain of intolerance towards immigrants or foreigners, 2) the emergence of at least one political party committed to mobilizing public resentment of immigrants or foreigners. Also, in line with Huntington’s notion of a civilizational clash between the West

and the Muslim world,³ a third characteristic is often added: a populist media's coverage of Islam in Europe that consolidates and frames the negative image of migrants, enlarges the sphere of fear, and results in emerging anti-Islamic sentiments.⁴

Consequently, Muslim migration and Islam are now frequently being presented in Western public discourses as a security threat that must be dealt with. It is often argued⁵ that both Western states and societies construct a fear of 'migrants' and 'others' 'by categorizing, stigmatizing and coupling migration together with major problems such as unemployment, violence, crime, insecurity, etc.'. Such issues have recently become security issues through processes of social construction⁶ that are thought to endanger not only the state but also the values, the maintenance of collective identities and core characteristics of society - that is, the ability to live as 'we'.⁷ Therefore, states or sub-state actors such as political parties are likely 'to employ the discourse of securitization as a political technique that can integrate a society politically by staging a credible existential threat in the form of an internal, or even an external, enemy'.⁸

Austria as a Case Study

Contemporary discourses portraying Islam and Muslim communities as menacing societies are not isolated phenomena. In terms of mass immigration, in Austria the existence of large Muslim communities or the emergence of radical right-wing forces opposing immigration exhibits many similarities with other Western⁹ nations:

1) *The existence of large Muslim communities:* Similarly to many other European countries of mass immigration, Austria has been experiencing subsequent waves of Muslim 'guest worker' immigration from the 1960s on and is now host to large Muslim immigrant communities of mainly Turkish, Bosnian, Kurdish or Arab descent up to the second generation.¹⁰ Today, the country's 516,000 Muslims account for 6.2 % of the total population and Islam represents the second largest faith group, second only to Catholicism.¹¹

2) *The rise of anti-Islamic sentiments:* As for the Europe-wide phenomenon of rising anti-Islamic sentiments, according to a 2010 report, a large majority (71%) of non-Muslim Austrians tend to feel a great incompatibility between

Islamic and Western values and norms, while 54% of the respondents perceive Islam as a threat to the West and 72% think that Muslims are unwilling to integrate and adapt to Western values.¹²

3) *The emergence of a right-wing political force targeting Islam and immigration:* By labeling ‘radical Islam’ as a menace to both Austria and the ‘Christian West’¹³ and voicing popular fears rooted in continuous Muslim immigration and Turkey’s ill-received EU accession bid, the charismatic leader Jörg Haider succeeded in moving the right-wing populist FPÖ, ‘Freedom Party of Austria’ (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*;) – a peripheral, German-national party – from the fringes towards the national and European mainstream.¹⁴ Although Haider’s prolific media-image – providing a strong voice for anti-immigrant sentiments – was the main propeller behind the party’s growing popularity, which even allowed it to form a coalition government with the conservative ÖVP between 2000 and 2005, his replacement as chairman of the party by Heinz-Christian Strache in 2005 and his death in 2008 did little harm to the party’s anti-immigrant/anti-Muslim stance and rising popularity. Also, FPÖ was the first nation-wide political force to address popular discontent over immigration, and Islam in particular, as a topic of political discourse and to introduce the ‘Islamic card’ into Austrian politics during the 1999 national elections.¹⁵ This election campaign, which is often referred to as a populist, FPÖ-led *Ausländerwahlkampf*, or ‘foreigner election campaign’, was just the first among several further campaigns that started pointing explicitly at Islam and Muslims by portraying the religion and its followers directly or indirectly in a negative light, or even as a looming menace. For instance, the hitherto most ferocious of these, the 2005 Vienna re-election campaign in which the FPÖ explicitly targeted Islam with slogans such as ‘*Wien darf nicht Istanbul werden*’ (‘Vienna must not become Istanbul’), ‘*Pummerin statt Muezzin*’ (‘Pummerin [the main historic bell of the Vienna Cathedral], not muezzin’) or ‘*Daham statt Islam*’ (‘Homeland instead of Islam’),¹⁶ is often seen as a turning point in Austrian politics.¹⁷ Since then, the issue of anti-Islamism has not faded away from the Austrian political discourse, and the continuing anti-Islamic tone of later election campaigns indicates the prevailing dominance of the issue.¹⁸ Take, for example, the FPÖ’s Graz MP, Susanne Winter’s scandalous remarks on Islam and the Prophet Muhammad in 2008 which envisioned a Muslim ‘immigration-tsunami’ and described the Prophet Muhammad as a violent ‘child-rapist’ who wrote the Quran under ‘epileptic attacks’.¹⁹ Beside electoral campaigns, issues such as the hotly debated controversy surrounding the minaret of a small mosque in the Alpine city of

Telfs in Tyrol in late 2005 are often argued to have resulted in Austria 'internalising' the Muslim question.²⁰

Islam in Austria: Then and Now

On the other hand however, for a number of reasons, Austria offers a case that is distinctive from other classical countries of immigration that makes it a valuable subject of research.

Firstly – unlike most modern Western European nations which have encountered Islam through 19th-century colonial expansion or recent migratory movements – with her centuries-long history of direct, face-to-face interaction between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, Austria has had a significantly unique historical experience with Islam. Most prominently, the two Turkish sieges of Vienna in 1529 and 1683 and the on-going Ottoman-Habsburg wars in the 17th - 18th centuries has fed Austria's self-perception as the 'last bulwark that defended Christianity' and still form a fundamental part of the country's collective memory to this day. Although still considered to be a 'founding myth' and a 'pillar of Austrian identity', today's population regards the significance of the sieges to be rather low.²¹ However, the memory of the sieges is continuously kept alive through history education, places of memory and public debates, with the first having a decisive role in sustaining and reproducing centuries-old anti-Muslim/anti-Turkish images: Austrian schoolbooks especially continue to deliver the old stereotypes of the Turkish danger and tend to portray Islam as aggressive, backward, fundamentalist, archaic and discriminative against women and minorities. This image is further reinforced by various street names, a number of monuments, plaques, and canonised images across Vienna and Eastern Austria providing the clichéd image of 'threatening' or 'defeated' Orientals.²²

Secondly, the Austro-Hungarian Empire's involvement in the Balkans in the 19th century (culminating in the 1878 occupation and 1908 annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a region with a large indigenous Muslim population) incorporated a large number of Muslim subjects directly into the Empire's metropolitan territory – i.e. not as an overseas colony like those of the British, French, and Dutch colonial empires. As a result, Islam in particular was recognized constitutionally as one of the Empire's religious denominations as early as 1912,²³ a unique, early piece of legislation. This *Islamgesetz*, or Islam Act, was successfully re-enacted in 1979 allowing the

formation of the *Community of Muslims in Austria* (IGGiÖ), a public body functioning as the official representation board of all Muslims residing in the country, regulating internal and community affairs including religious education in public schools, burials, and marriages.²⁴

Research Problem

What is of interest with regards to Austria is the fact that even though the notion of Islam and Muslim immigration as a threat has only been uttered by one nation-wide right-wing political force, this view has hardly been contested by the society as a whole and has been shared by far-rightist as well as liberal politicians and many intellectuals.²⁵ Regarding the aforementioned unique legal status and institutional equality that Islam has been enjoying for so many decades now, this situation is even more puzzling. This research contends that discourses framing Islam and practices governing Muslims in Austria securitize the religion and its followers. Applying the lens of second-generation theorists of securitization as its theoretical framework, this study is intended to understand the relationship between the laws governing and the political rhetoric attacking Islam and Muslims, which is argued to be disconnected. Also, it seeks to shed light on the discursive processes through which Islam and Muslims are constructed to be a primary threat in the eye of an audience that goes far beyond the constituency of a single party.

Research Aims

The study upon which the paper is based has three goals. First, it is to explore how actors and discourses that are at play at the local level effectively ‘speak security’ in order to portray, essentialize, and deal with Islam and Muslims as a threat. This analysis aims to highlight the discursive processes through which Islam is securitized as well the power-relations between the elements of agency as well as the interplay between securitizing actors and their directly or indirectly receptive audience(s).

Secondly, the study aims to examine the apparently disconnected relationship between Austria’s uniquely early, liberal legislation governing Islam vis-à-vis Austria’s strong tradition of populist, right-wing politics, and the rapid shift from the consensus of a fundamentally harmonious coexistence between Muslim and non-Muslim Austrians to wide-spread and full-fledged anti-Islamic sentiments. It is crucial to examine the linkage between the identified

agencies and the socio-cultural and historical ‘*embeddedness*’ of the assessed discourses, and analyze and illuminate how underlying narratives inform the discourses and the intersubjective understanding of the threat-utterance between actors and audience.

Thirdly, study aims to critically engage and contingently complement recent innovative literature from second-generation theorists of securitization such as T. Balzacq and H. Stritzel among others who emphasize the need to include the socio-cultural context of discourses in order to enhance our understanding of securitizing mechanisms.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand the process through which Islam and its followers are constructed, portrayed, and dealt with as a threat to the state or (segments) of society, this study looks at *securitization theory* as its analytical tool to trace the process of the emergence of a threat image. As a largely Constructivist approach, initially, to a national security discourse, the so called Copenhagen School’s theory of securitization has the primary aim to examine how a certain issue is transformed into a matter of security. Its original emphasis on discursive processes is in strong contrast to classical Realist approaches, which mainly focus on the material dispositions of the threat including distribution of power, or military capabilities.²⁶ In order to do so, *securitization theory* (ST) introduces a distinctive process-oriented conception of security in which security issues are being understood to be produced by *securitizing actors*, who argue that their community or its foundations or characteristics (a *referent object*) are being existentially threatened by an identified *referent subject*. Therefore it is contingent that the actors have the right to use extraordinary measures to defend the community and contain the threat. Put differently, as its basic approach, ST is an analytical framework aiming to understand ‘*who securitizes, on what threats, for whom, why, with what results, and not least, under what conditions and through what discourses*’²⁷ (Buzan et al. 1998: 25).

Drawing on this original concept, second-generation securitization theorists influenced by social theories talk about securitization primarily in terms of practices, context, and power relations that characterize the construction of threat images. Recent scholarship has widened the focus of empirical analysis by looking at, e.g., the social and linguistic relatedness and *sequentiality* as well as at the socio-cultural *embeddedness*²⁸ of texts and discourses in history,

memory and discursive tropes that may constrain actors' choices;²⁹ the positional power of actors who influence the process of defining meaning; or the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction.³⁰

Analysis

In accordance with this theoretical framework paying attention to the contextual environment in which discourses are embedded, this study draws on the Viennese School of Critical Discourse Analysis. Its primary method focuses on the dialogical struggles nested in power relations in order to offer a 'thick description' of the social practices associated with the construction and highlights the historical background in which the analyzed discursive events are imbedded.³¹ Also, it seeks to understand how and to what extent inter-subjective narratives within the majority population have historically evolved, and eventually enabled securitization.

In order to provide a 'big picture', i.e. the widest possible scope in which the construction of Islam as a threat evolves and resonates, the analysis identifies relevant environments in which securitizing discourses take place or by which they are sustained:

1) *Political elite discourses*, at the upper-end of the scope, shed light on the discursive aspects of the role of the country's political élites and other institutions in the production and reproduction of anti-Islamism, anti-immigrant sentiments, and threat perceptions. These enable the examination of the structures and patterns of texts about 'us', the 'others', as well as the threats posed by these 'others' – whether these are suggested in a direct, outspoken, or an indirect, subtle, concealed way in a multitude of different but connected discourses. Primary sources of this set include official materials such as parties' programs (most prominently the FPÖ's 2008 position paper on Islam), parliamentary debates (European, federal, or regional), manifestos, election campaign materials, speeches and official documents expressing positions towards the actual, or any related, issues. Party élites are pivotal actors in, and shapers of, Austria's political and societal discourses and as such are constantly required to justify their actions and positions regarding certain issues in order to gain the support of their electorates and constituencies. Therefore, party élites have always been major vehicles for the transmission of ideas between society and the state. Both of the country's two major historic

mass integration parties, the Socialists and the Conservatives, as well as smaller forces instigate, shape and reflect major political debates³² and hold various stances on questions surrounding Islam and Muslims in the country.

2) *Media discourses*, on the other end of the scope, relay political discourse to the public, while at the same time contributing their own slanted perspective of Muslims and Islam both within domestic and external contexts.³³ In order to enable as broad a medial scope as possible, both socially and geographically, news coverage on Islam and Muslims of two of Austria's leading news outlets, the Vienna-based *Die Presse* daily representing high-brow quality journalism, as well as the Styria-based *Kleine Zeitung*, which leans towards the tabloid, will be analyzed.

3) *Contextual environments*. Also, to account for the resulting relationship of uniquely early liberal legislation governing Islam vis-à-vis the Alpine republic's strong tradition of populist right-wing politics and the recent shift to wide-spread anti-Islamic sentiments, which is argued to be disconnected, it is crucial to look at how underlying narrative contexts, in which the analyzed discourses are embedded, – e.g. narratives of national identity – inform these discourses and facilitate the inter-subjective understanding of the threat-utterance between securitizing actors and their receptive audience.

Conclusion

Securitizing theory provides a framework with which to understand the arguably disconnected relationship between the laws governing political rhetoric and the way Islam and Muslims are framed. It also sheds light on the processes through which these were constructed as a primary threat image in the eye of an audience that goes far beyond the constituency of a single party. The hitherto unexamined case of Islam in Austria, which displays a number of contextual parameters distinct from existing studies reviewing the securitization of Islam in other Western nations, has the potential to offer valuable additional empirical insights to ST and scholarship on Euro-Islam.

Notes

¹ Ayhan Kaya, *Islam, Migration, and Integration: The Age of Securitization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4 .

² Quoted in: Sam Cherribi, "An Obsession Renewed: Islamophobia in the Netherlands, Austria,

and Germany,” in John L. Esposito, *Islamophobia: A Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47.

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)

⁴ Quoted in Sam Cherribi (2011).

⁵ Just to name a few, these many proponents include Kristina Boréus, “Nationalism and Discursive Discrimination against Immigrants in Austria, Denmark and Sweden,” in Wodak et al. (eds.) *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); Roxanne L. Doty “Immigration and the Politics of Security,” in *Security Studies* 8/2-3 (2000); Jeff Huysmans, Alessandra Buonfino, “Politics of Exception and Unease: Immigration, Asylum and Terrorism in Parliamentary Debates in the UK,” in *Political Studies*, 56:4, (2008); or Raymond Taras, *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

⁶ Roxanne L. Doty “Immigration and the Politics of Security,” in *Security Studies* 8/2-3 (2000)

⁷ Berry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 25.

⁸ Kaya, *Islam, Migration and Integration*, 8.

⁹ Although from a number of mainly historical and socio-cultural perspectives Austria is arguably a Central rather than Western European nation, in the Huntingtonian sense however, it is – such as is the rest of Central Europe – part of what he refers to as the sphere of ‘Western civilisation’.

¹⁰ “Islam in Austria” *Euro-Islam: News and Analysis on Islam in Europe and North America*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/austria/> (last retrieved 18.11.2012)

¹¹ Alexander Janda, Mathias Vogl (eds.), *Islam in Österreich* (Vienna: Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, 2009), 5-6.

¹² IMAS International, *Report: Der Islam in den Augen der Bevölkerung*, 6 (2001).

¹³ Matti Bunzl, *Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Hatred Old and New in Europe* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2007), 33.

¹⁴ Sam Cherribi, “An Obsession Renewed: Islamophobia in the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany,” in John L. Esposito, *Islamophobia: A Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

¹⁵ Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich [IGGiÖ] (ed.), *Volkszählung 2001 in Österreich: Kommentar zu den islambezogenen Ergebnissen*, (2002) retrieved from <http://www.derislam.at/islam.php?name=Themen&pa=showpage&pid=57>

¹⁶ Janda/Vogl, *Islam in Österreich*.

¹⁷ Farid Hafez, “Islamophobe Diskursstrategien in Grün und Blau. Eine diskursanalytische Analyse eines Interviews des Grünen Bundesrat Efgani Dönmez,” in Jonny Bunzl, Farid Hafez (eds.) *Islamophobie in Österreich* (Innsbruck, Vienna, Bolzano: StudienVerlag, 2009).

¹⁸ Farid Hafez, “Zwischen Islamophobie und Islamophilie: Die FPÖ und der Islam,” in Jonny Bunzl, Farid Hafez (eds.) *Islamophobie in Österreich* (Innsbruck, Vienna, Bolzano: StudienVerlag, 2009).

¹⁹ ‘FPÖ-Politikerin beleidigt Mohammed’, *Der Standard*, 23.01.2008

- ²⁰ Klaus Hödl "Islamophobia in Austria: The Recent Emergence of Anti-Muslim Sentiments in the Country," in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 30/4 (2010)
- ²¹ Susanne Heine, Rüdiger Lohlker, Richard Potz, *Muslimen in Österreich* (Innsbruck-Vienna: Tyrolia Verlag, 2012), 41.
- ²² The issue of anti-Islamism in Austrian school history textbooks has been thematized in Susanne Heine, *Islam zwischen Selbstbild und Klischee. Eine Religion im österreichischen Schulbuch* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 1995) and Susanne Heine, Marianne Pratl, "Auf holprigen Wegen. Die Darstellung des Islam in österreichischen Schulbüchern, Fach Geschichte, 5-8. Stufe," in Jonny Bunzl, Farid Hafez (eds.) *Islamophobie in Österreich* (Innsbruck, Vienna, Bolzano: StudienVerlag, 2009).
- ²³ Anna Strobel, "Einzigartiger rechtlicher Status: Die Muslime in Österreich," in *Herder Korrespondenz*, 4 (2006): 201.
- ²⁴ Martina Schmied, "Islam in Österreich," in Walter Posch, Martina Schmied, Sibylle Wentker, *Islam, Islamismus und islamischer Extremismus* (Vienna: Landesverteidigungsakademie, Institut für Friedenssicherung und Konfliktmanagement, 2005).
- ²⁵ Klaus Hödl "Islamophobia in Austria: The Recent Emergence of Anti-Muslim Sentiments in the Country," in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 30/4 (2010).
- ²⁶ Robert Emmers, "Securitization," in Allan Collins (ed.), *Contemporary Security Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- ²⁷ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 25.
- ²⁸ Holger Stritzel "Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond," in *European Journal of International Relations*, 13/3 (2007).
- ²⁹ Mark Salter, "Securitization and desecuritization: a dramaturgical analysis of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority," in *Journal of international relations and development*, 11/4 (2008).
- ³⁰ Thierry Balzacq, "The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context," in *European Journal of International Relations*, 11 (2005).
- ³¹ Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cilia, Martin Reisigl, "The Discursive Construction of National Identities," in *Discourse and Society*, 10:2 (1999).
- ³² Martin Marcussen, Thomas Risse, Daniela Engelmann-Martin, Hans Joachim Knopf and Klaus Roscher, "Constructing Europe? The evolution of French, British and German nation state identities," in *Journal of European Public Policy* 6:4 Special Issue (1999)
- ³³ Teun A. van Dijk, "Denying racism: Elite discourse and racism," in (Eds.) (1993) *Racism and Migration in Western Europe*, eds. Solomos and Wrench, (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 179-193.

Young German Muslims and their Visibility in the Media: Emerging Counterpublics

ASMAA SOLIMAN

Abstract

*This paper discusses young German Muslims and identity-related expressions in public spheres. It focuses on two young Muslims who both use new media. One of them is Nuri Senay who founded the video website *muslime.tv* (<http://muslime.tv>). The other is Kuebra Guemuesay who is known for her blog *Ein Fremdwoerterbuch* (<http://ein-fremdwoerterbuch.com>). The study makes a qualitative examination of how these individuals use the public sphere in relation to German Muslim identity. The paper argues that *muslime.tv* and *Ein Fremdwoerterbuch* can both be seen as counterpublics. Crucial elements of counterpublics, namely the perception of an exclusive mainstream public, the circulation of self-definitions and counter discourses, as well as criticism towards mainstream discourses and representations are all present.*

This paper presents two case studies of young Muslims in Germany who use new media as counterpublics to challenge the mainstream public's discourse and representations of Muslims. Kuebra Guemuesay and her blog *Ein Fremdwoerterbuch* and Nuri Senay and his video website *muslime.tv* are examined.

Counterpublics are described as publics of subordinated groups who use these spaces on their behalf to expand their life-world and self-image.¹ In this way these groups overcome the denial of their public existence, formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities and contest specific assumptions that were previously exempt from criticism. With regard to the relation between counterpublics and the dominant public it is said that a counterpublic remains distinct from authority. It has a critical relation to power. Robert Asen who examines scholars' use of the term counterpublics offers the following elaboration on the term:

'Counterpublic' has emerged as a critical term to signify that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants.²

He explains that the ‘counter’ of counterpublics lies in participants’ recognition of being excluded from the wider public and in the articulation of alternative discourses and norms.

There are three main characteristics of counterpublics that can be observed in Kuebra’s and Nuri’s public involvements. Firstly, the idea that minorities feel excluded, restricted and misrepresented by the main public plays an important role. Secondly, one can see individuals who intend to define themselves publicly in their own ways and who offer alternative self-representations. Thirdly, these individuals circulate counter-discourses that are critical of the main public.

This paper presents two case studies that are part of a broader PhD project qualitatively examining several case studies of young Muslims in Germany and their different public involvements in the context of German Muslim identity. For both the case studies illustrated in this paper in-depth interviews with the website creators and analyses of the respective websites were carried out.

Introduction to the Case Studies

Nuri was born in Bremerhaven in Germany. He lives in Cologne where he teaches English and Turkish. He belongs to the second generation of immigrants and his ethnic origin is Turkish. Nuri is the founder of *muslime.tv*, an online video platform that mainly presents stories about Muslims from Germany in a documentary style. He founded *muslime.tv* in June 2010.

Kuebra is of Turkish origin, but was born and raised in Hamburg. She studied political science and works in the media sector. In 2008 she founded her blog *Ein Fremdwörterbuch*, (‘A Dictionary Of Foreign Words’). The themes of Islam and Muslims in Germany play an essential role in her blog. Her blog was nominated for the Grimme Online Award in 2011 and has up to 13,000 visitors per month.³

Dominant Public Discourse and Representations of Muslims in Germany

Both subjects express feelings of frustration with regard to Germany’s mainstream public and its representation of Muslims. According to them the

main public is exclusionary and restrictive, and does not offer free spaces of expression for Muslims. Moreover, they say that the main public often misrepresents Muslims and associates them with negative characteristics, such as violence, oppression and backwardness.

Having asked Nuri why he decided to found *muslime.tv* he said that it started with disappointment in Germany's mainstream public discourse and media representation of Muslims. Since 9/11 Nuri had increasingly seen the importance of creating a Muslim media presence in the German-speaking sphere. He argues that since 9/11 there has been an obvious assault by the media, and Islamophobic statements had suddenly become a legitimate mode of expression. In his eyes, German mainstream media is not productive in its coverage of Muslims and false information is being transmitted. He criticizes it as one-sided and unbalanced. His following statement illustrates how *muslime.tv* was born:

My wife and I were sitting in front of the TV watching a program titled *Veil and Sharia – Does Islam fit to Germany?* We see that the topic is already defined and that it goes in a particular direction, that the guests are selected... Then, of course, I get disappointed and change the channel. I tell my wife it is always the same, one gets sick of it. But then I realize that even if I change the channel millions of other people watch this program and are shaped by contents like this.⁴

The idea that the mainstream public frames the story about Islam and Muslims in a particular way is clearly conveyed.

According to Nuri and Kuebra, Muslims are mainly associated with negative features in Germany's public sphere. They argue that the normal lives of Muslims are often not shown in public representations. They stress that there are many young Muslims who are active in society and make a positive contribution but who are completely ignored in the mainstream public of Germany. They say there are many practicing Muslims whose religious values pose no contradiction to German culture, yet nobody knows about them.

In contrast to the dominant public, the subjects of the case studies see their own publics as completely free spaces where they can express themselves in the way they want. Kuebra, for example, emphasized that she appreciates the freedom of expression she has in her blog. The ability, as Nancy Fraser puts it, to speak in one's own voice within a counterpublic seems to play a major role here.⁵ Kuebra elaborates on the blog's free space as follows:

Obviously you are your own editor-in-chief when you have your own blog, no one censors you except for yourself, no one edits you except for yourself so you are basically your own boss, you decide what you want to do, you decide the context you are in, so it is basically all in your hand.⁶

This perception of a free space that empowers individuals to be their own authors, to decide which themes are addressed and how and to represent themselves in the way they want is crucial in the context of counterpublics.

Kuebra compares the freedom she enjoys in her blog to the constraints of Germany's mainstream public and mainstream media, particularly in the context of Muslims. She argues that she never really experienced complete freedom of expression when she was invited to mainstream TV shows. In her view Muslims are always under various forms of pressure when they appear on these shows. She conveys the experience as a very challenging situation. Her experiences in TV shows reflect a very strained arena where one has to develop strategies to cope with the different forces at play. She expressed a need to "destroy the game" and "not going to those traps", illustrating the particular burdens she has to face as a Muslim⁷ and communicating a picture of a biased and pre-structured public sphere that puts Muslims in an uncomfortable position. The Habermasian idea of a neutral and non-pre-structured public does not seem to resonate with Kuebra's perception.⁸ Moreover, the feeling of being pushed into using a specific language that constructs discourses in a particular way comes to the foreground.

The argument that the main public exerts assimilative pressures on minorities by allowing only one main language to be spoken, as several critics of the Habermasian public have said, can be seen in Kuebra's and Nuri's statements.⁹ In Nuri's eyes Muslims are generally not really integrated in mainstream public discourses and mainstream media. There has to be "a real media democracy" that allows all social groups to express themselves freely, says Nuri.¹⁰ Habermas's notion of an accessible and inclusive public sphere does not seem to be the case.¹¹

Self-definitions and Alternative Identity Representations

Self-representation and offering alternative identity images are crucial elements in *muslime.tv* and *Ein Fremdwoerterbuch*. The perception, described above, of an exclusionary, restrictive public that misrepresents Muslims, prompted both subjects of the case studies to create spaces where Muslims

talk about themselves rather than being talked about by others. Nuri emphasizes that *muslime.tv* is meant to give an insight into Muslim life in Germany and should mirror the status quo of Muslims without being subject to external pressures. Kuebra expresses a similar intention. Asked why she started her blog, she describes her motivation as follows: “I wanted to create a space of encounters with people who have never met a Muslim girl before, and to give an insight into a Muslim girl’s life in Germany.”¹²

Both platforms developed due to an urgent feeling that Muslim life should be presented from an insider perspective and that the mainstream image of Muslims must be countered. In the creation of platforms where Muslims are shown from their own perspectives, one recognizes Nancy Fraser’s idea of a counterpublic that enables minorities to present their self-image.¹³

A diversity of topics is featured on both platforms. What all themes have in common is that they mainly deal with Muslims in Germany and Islam-related issues. With regard to the issue of identity, there are two particularly notable aspects. The first deals specifically with Muslim identity and the importance of Islam in the lives of Kuebra and the Muslims featured on *muslime.tv*. Matters that concern practicing Muslims, like Islamic prayer, spirituality, charity, Islamic marriage, Islamic pilgrimage and fasting, come to the foreground in *muslime.tv* and in *Ein Fremdwoerterbuch*. The second aspect is the relationship of Muslim identity to Germany. German Muslim lifestyle is conveyed and the perception that Muslims do not belong to Germany is challenged.

There is moreover an implicit call for the normalisation of German Muslim identity which, despite differences, is like any other identity. Kuebra, for example, addresses random issues in her blog, such as travel, arts, music, movies and recipes. Talking about ‘normal’ issues like these conveys an image of German Muslims’ normality, not only concerned with Islam-related matters but also interested in more general, ‘normal’ themes. As Michael Warner argues, one can see a demand for the recognition of a minority identity’s normality.¹⁴

The various depictions of Muslims in both platforms offer an alternative, multifaceted picture that differs from the one portrayed in the mainstream public. The idea that imposed identities are being contested and alternative identities promoted, as expressed by Craig Calhoun and Marjorie Mayo, can

clearly be seen in the case studies.¹⁵ The involvement of Muslims in fields such as music, sports, arts, charity work, education and fashion all represent a different image. Muslims are not associated with negative connotations, such as violence, oppression and terrorism. Moreover, not only the compatibility of Islam and Germany and the normality of German Muslim identity are communicated, but also the idea that Muslims participate in German society is conveyed. All the different insights into young Muslims' lives in Germany show a positive image of Muslims that offer an oppositional understanding of identity, as Warner puts it, and challenges negative mainstream assumptions about Muslims.¹⁶

Mainstream Public and Participation in Public Discourse

These platforms not only present alternative stories about Muslims in Germany, they also function as spaces where Muslims criticize and participate in mainstream public discourses regarding Muslims in Germany. An example is Kuebra's entry "When The Cameras Are Off", where her scepticism about the way in which Muslims are treated and talked about in the public is expressed. By elaborating on the example of an experienced talk show guest who changed his words about Muslims in a negative way once he was in front of the camera, the idea that there is intentional denunciation of Muslims is communicated. Moreover, she illustrates the moderator's and audience's bias, saying that the moderator did not intervene at moments when she felt she was being attacked by the other guest and interrupted by the audience, showing the moderator's bias and the audience's vulgarity.

One example of the platforms' participation in public discourses is *muslime.tv*'s video featuring a young Muslim who responds to Thilo Sarrazin's anti-Muslim statements in a satirical way. He contributes to the discourse by voicing his scepticism about Sarrazin's statements and the generally negative attitude towards Muslims in Germany. By expressing that negative comments about Muslims are common in Germany and that the equation of Islam and terror shapes the way many Germans think about Muslims, he brings another element to the foreground of public discourse. Rather than talking about Muslims and Islam, he reflects upon the issue of how Germans think about Muslims and Islam. It can be understood as a way of critically confronting German society and its stance towards Muslims.

It is important to mention that while criticising and participating in mainstream discourses, dominant concepts that are used in relation to Muslims are challenged. An example is a German Muslim scholar's perspective on the Islamic meaning of Sharia which is featured on *muslime.tv*. His view offers a different definition to the mainstream meaning that is associated with this word in Germany. He explains that Sharia does not stand for Islamic law as many people think, but for "the ethical-legal overall system of Islam".¹⁷ From an etymological-symbolic perspective, Sharia means the Islamic way of life. He gives the example of Muslims who follow Islamic practices like praying, arguing that they thereby embrace Sharia. One can see that his definition moves away from the populist rhetoric of a radical political body that will enforce its laws on German society.

A further example of challenging mainstream concepts is Kuebra's blog post "Well-meant But: No, Thanks!" about the activists group Femen who want to 'liberate' Muslim women. In this paper Kuebra presents her views on Femen's International Topless Jihad Day. She also includes a picture that depicts six young Muslim women wearing the veil. They are holding placards saying "Freedom of choice", "I am already free", "Islam is my choice", "Against suppression", "Fight for me! Let me be how I want to be, not how you think I should be" and "There is more than one way to be free".

Beyond describing and commenting on the Topless Jihad Day, its background story and young German Muslim women's reactions, Kuebra touches upon profound conceptual levels of feminism. The aforementioned slogans that Kuebra demonstrates put Femen, and specific feminist understandings, as well as the concept of liberty, into question. With these statements young Muslim women express their critical stance towards those feminists who project their own understandings of liberty on them. According to these women these feminists want to liberate them in the way that they want them to be liberated, not the way they themselves want to be liberated. They also emphasize that there are multiple ways of being free. As women who wear the veil and who follow the Islamic dress code, they counter the idea that Islam, the Islamic value system and covering are incompatible with the value of freedom. Also, Kuebra's self-disclosure as a Muslim feminist who wears the headscarf confirms that in her eyes covering is compatible with feminism. In her closing statement in which she asserts that paternalism was the initial cause of feminism, and her previous description of Femen as paternalistic, Kuebra emphasises feminism's original motives and at the same time she casts

doubt on Femen's feminist direction. In so doing, Kuebra represents young Muslims who not only challenge existing understandings of feminism and liberty, but also offers, albeit indirectly, new concepts, for example, the idea that veiling can be understood as a liberating act.

In conclusion, all in all it can be argued that there are significant features of counterpublics in both media platforms. Feelings of exclusion and misrepresentation by the mainstream public, circulations of alternative identity images, and criticism of main public discourses can all be observed in Nuri's and Kuebra's projects.

Notes

¹ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2002).

² Robert Asen, "Seeking the 'Counter' in Counterpublics," *Communication Theory* 10 (2000): 424.

³ Jan Kuhlmann, "Die Muslimische Bloggerin Kübra Gümüşay," *Deutschlandfunk* (2012), http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/die-muslimische-bloggerin-kuebra-guemuesay.886.de.html?dram:article_id=219178 (Accessed 1 December 2013)

⁴ Asmaa Soliman, interview with Nuri Senay, 2012.

⁵ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere".

⁶ Asmaa Soliman, interview with Kuebra Guemuesay (2013).

⁷ Ibid..

⁸ Juergen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).

⁹ Nancy Fraser, "Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism" *Social Text* 15 (1997): 279-289; Judith Butler, "Merely Cultural" *Social Text* 15 (1997): 265-277.

¹⁰ Soliman, interview with Nuri.

¹¹ Juergen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

¹² Soliman, interview with Kuebra.

¹³ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere".

¹⁴ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*.

¹⁵ Craig Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity", in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Craig Calhoun (London: Blackwell, 1994); Marjorie Mayo, *Cultures, Communities, Identities: Cultural Strategies for Participation and Empowerment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

¹⁶ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*.

¹⁷ Oezdil, cited in *muslime.tv* (2011), <http://muslime.tv/> (Accessed 03/01/2014).

Religious Travel and *Tablighī Jamā‘at*: Modalities of Expansion in Britain and Beyond

RIYAZ TIMOL

Abstract

Extant academic literature on the Tablighī Jamā‘at provides the rudiments of a schema for understanding its modalities of expansion in new socio-cultural milieus. This paper first explicates these modalities in more detail and applies them to the historical development of TJ in Britain. I then test and amplify this schema utilizing fresh data generated during a 40-day fieldwork khurāj (outing) to Bulgaria as a reflexive participant observer with a British TJ group. The paper argues that the Western branch of the movement has achieved a degree of institutional robustness and autonomy from TJ’s South Asian headquarters. Finally, the paper reflects upon possible future trajectories for British TJ in relation to the author’s ongoing ethnographic fieldwork.

Introduction

The *Tablighī Jamā‘at* (TJ) is frequently described as the largest movement of Islamic revival in the world today.¹ An ‘apolitical, quietist movement of internal grassroots missionary renewal,² its mosque-based activism encourages participants to go out on small group tours inviting other Muslims to faithfully practice Islam. TJ first began in the 1920s through the activities of Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (1885-1944), an Indian ‘ālim rooted in the conservative Sufism of the Deobandi tradition.³ Conscious of the limitations of traditional reformist methods, Ilyas focused his energies on *da‘wah* to effect large-scale religious reform among the Meos of early twentieth-century northern India.⁴ Under the leadership of his son, Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi (1917-1965), TJ expanded its operations globally and is now ‘said to be active in almost every country with a significant Sunni Muslim presence.’⁵ TJ came to Britain with the post-colonial immigration drive and has set up a strong base for itself predominantly amongst the South Asian diasporic community. Yet the modalities through which it transmits and embeds itself into new socio-cultural milieus have, to date, received but scant academic attention. In this paper, based upon current doctoral ethnographic fieldwork, I propose to examine these modalities in

greater depth and offer some tentative reflections about the way the movement functions in contemporary societies.

Setting the Scene: Identifying Key Modalities of Expansion

Edward Said, in an essay entitled ‘Traveling Theory’, sketches a four-fold typology of the way in which ideas and theories may respond to unfamiliar socio-cultural settings: ‘First, there is a point of origin ... a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth ... Second, there is a distance traversed ... Third, there is a set of conditions – ... of acceptance or ... resistances – which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea ... Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated ... idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place.’⁶ With reference to the TJ, Marc Gaborieau, in his detailed chronology of the movement’s spread abroad, provides the rudiments of a schema for understanding the modalities through which it seeks to emerge out of its South Asian matrix and embed itself in new socio-cultural milieus.⁷ According to his analysis, visiting TJ delegations work in host countries among local populations based upon a stratified vision of social hierarchy. First, the *ulema* are contacted for support and help, followed by lay intellectuals, then merchants and finally the masses. The publication of several subsequent studies on TJ in disparate foreign settings allows us now to flesh out Gaborieau’s rudimentary schema. For instance, Marloes Janson provides a history of TJ’s spread across both Francophone and Anglophone Africa, focusing in particular on the Gambia.⁸ Farish Noor presents a detailed account of TJ’s spread across the Indonesian island of Java, right from its inception with the very first visit by a Pathan group in February 1955 through to his own fieldwork conducted in July and September 2008.⁹ He also charts the spread of TJ to the neighboring countries of Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.¹⁰ A close reading of these accounts, in particular Noor’s, allows us to posit the following broad generalizations – conceived of as phases – about the modalities through which TJ transmits and embeds itself into new socio-cultural milieus.

Phase One

The primary arena for TJ activism continues to be South Asia, and specifically the Nizamuddin and Raiwind headquarters in New Delhi and Lahore respectively, from where constantly replenished teams of TJ activists are systematically dispatched across the globe to stimulate interest among local

Muslim communities in the TJ's particular vision of religious reform.

Phase Two

Upon arrival into a new socio-cultural context, visiting South Asian TJ delegations seek to firstly locate and win the support of local Muslims of South Asian ethnic origin, relying on historical linguistic and cultural affinities to secure their hospitality and assistance. As South Asian expatriate communities tend to replicate their sectarian differences in the immigrant context, visiting TJ groups can only work within limited segments of the South Asian Muslim diaspora. However, as the case of TJ in the Gambia demonstrates, TJ groups do also meet with success when directly engaging indigenous Muslims in the countries they visit.

Phase Three

Through their protracted stays and tours amongst South Asian diasporic communities, visiting TJ groups hope to cultivate and establish a home-grown presence of TJ activism in the countries they visit which are left as self-sustaining legacies. A home-grown presence of TJ in a new land can only be properly consolidated when citizens of that country journey to the South Asian headquarters at Nizamuddin or Raiwind, normally on a minimum four month tour, to receive training and thoroughly familiarize themselves with TJ techniques and mores.

Phase Four

Once a TJ presence has been initiated in a new land, the South Asian diasporic community is intensely proselytized by local citizens, now TJ activists – albeit predominantly of South Asian background – whose efforts are augmented by teams of foreign TJ groups who continue to visit. Considerable importance is given to the social and religious capital of TJ members-to-be who, once won over to the TJ cause, wield their influence to popularize TJ in the country.

Phase Five

In this phase, the TJ infrastructure of a country is developed and new bases are sought out and established from which TJ activities are further organized, orchestrated and expanded. During this stage, national TJ leaders also set their sights on Muslim populations in neighboring countries and local TJ

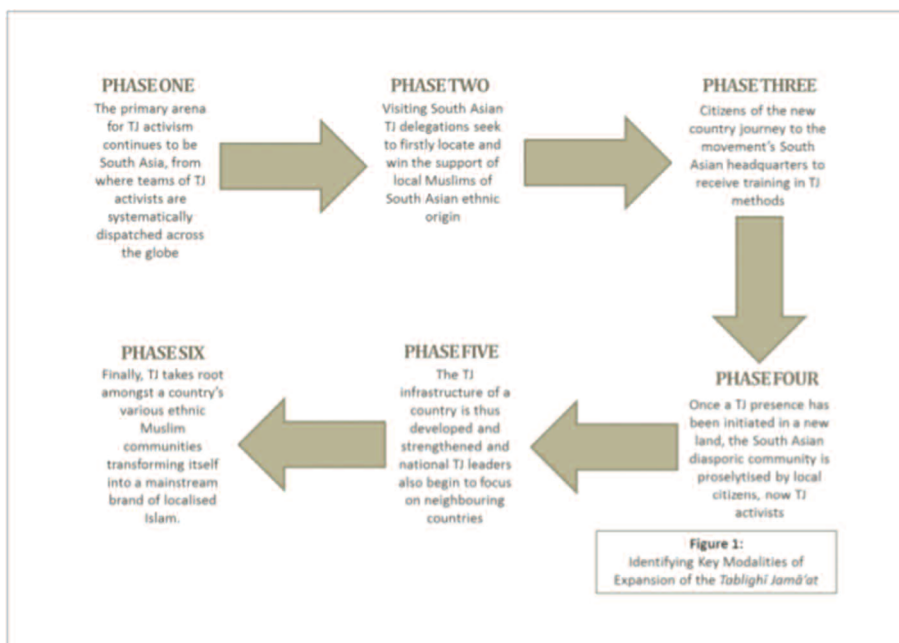
delegations make trips abroad to assess and augment TJ activities taking place there.

Phase Six

The final stage – coinciding with the fourth stage of Said’s typology - occurs when the TJ presence in the land has become sufficiently strong and self-sustaining so as to adapt its tactics to target indigenous Muslim populations directly. Once indigenous populations begin to respond, the TJ starts to lose its particular South Asian identity – tied with the historical realities of immigration - and metamorphoses into a mainstream brand of local Islam. In this regard Noor observes:

What began as a South Asian movement with a distinctive South Asian flavor and feel to it has now transformed itself into a localized mode of normative religiosity that finds adherence and support from the local population of Java. ... Unencumbered by ethnic and cultural attachments or the need to retain its South Asian identity, the *Tabligh* has managed to spread itself from India to Europe, Africa, the Arab world and Asia while localizing itself in each new context it finds itself in.¹¹

This tentative schema, derived largely from Noor’s account of the spread of TJ in Southeast Asia, may be represented graphically as follows:



Expanding Horizons: TJ in Britain and Europe

To what extent can the above schema be applied to the historical development of TJ in Britain? While the first recorded TJ activity took place in Britain in 1946¹² it was only the broader context of economically motivated mass immigration from former British colonies that allowed TJ to substantively root itself in British soil. Early years saw teams of TJ activists systematically dispatched from the movement's Lahore and Delhi headquarters to intensely proselytize the newly settled diaspora community (Phase One). In 1962, Britain's first TJ convocation (*ijtimā'*) was organized in Manchester. Though much smaller in scale than its South Asian counterparts, proceedings ran along the same lines and predominantly South Asian Muslims from as far afield as Leeds, Birmingham, London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Bradford and even Saudi Arabia and British Guyana were in attendance with local preaching groups subsequently dispatched to Coventry (Phase Two).¹³ Subsequent decades saw activist networks gradually develop amongst lower to middle class South Asian communities, particularly of Gujarati origin, as naturalized citizens began to journey back to the homeland for the requisite four month training period in TJ methods (Phase Three).¹⁴ In 1982 the movement's European headquarters opened at Dewsbury, West Yorkshire under the supervision of Hafiz Mohammad Patel, leader (*amīr*) of TJ in the West, and the movement was able to ally itself with the institutional infrastructure of Deobandi Islam relying upon its rapidly proliferating networks of mosques and seminaries to bolster its activities (Phase Four).¹⁵ Recent decades have seen further consolidation and expansion with five regional TJ headquarters (*marākiz*) now active in London, Glasgow, Leicester, Birmingham and Blackburn¹⁶ indicating the extent to which the movement has continued to grow (Phase Five), in spite of Sikand's misgivings:

From its phase of consolidation in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, the TJ seems to have entered a phase of gradual decline with the emergence of a new generation of British-born Muslims. Many young British Muslims today would seem to find the Tablighi expression of Islam outmoded, if not 'un-Islamic'. By making no significant modifications in its methods and approach to suit the exigencies of the British context, the TJ seems to have little hope for any very significant breakthroughs in Britain in the years to come.¹⁷

My ethnographic fieldwork, consisting of participant observation and a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews, seeks to understand the appeal of TJ to second and third generation British-born Muslims raised in secular contexts. As part of my fieldwork, I undertook a 40-day *khurūj* with the TJ in

late 2013 to the Eastern European country of Bulgaria as a reflexive participant observer.¹⁸ The remainder of this paper considers preliminary findings arising from that trip in relation to the key modalities of expansion identified above. My contention is that TJ in Britain currently operates at the advanced stage of Phase Five as evidenced by the robustness of its internal infrastructure and the frequency with which British TJ delegations are dispatched across Europe and to America, of which my fieldtrip to Bulgaria provides an example. Should my schema prove to be correct, we should see a transition into Phase Six in coming years and a concomitant indigenization of British TJ; a theme which my fieldwork continues to explore in more detail.

My TJ group consisted of five male members, all British-born second or third generation Gujaratis,¹⁹ aged 27-35. Four of the group members hailed from the North West of England while one was from Yorkshire and several group members met each other for the first time in the context of this TJ trip. English was the primary medium of discourse throughout the journey, though each group member was competent in Gujarati and able to speak and read basic Urdu. In addition, the leader of the group (*amīr*) was fluent in Arabic. Each group member had previously undertaken the requisite four month training period to the South Asian headquarters of the movement within the last ten years excepting the *amīr* who had made this trip in 1997 aged 19. In addition, individual group members had already travelled, as part of prior (usually 40-day long) TJ delegations, to countries as diverse as Canada, Guyana, Barbados, South Africa, America, Finland, Trinidad and Tobago, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. Our *amīr* already had some familiarity with Bulgaria as he had been part of a 40 day British TJ team that visited the country in 2005.

Our journey began in November 2013 at the movement's European headquarters in Dewsbury where the group was formed, the *amīr* selected and the destination decided upon by TJ leaders there. We were instructed to travel by road and a van was accordingly hired. We journeyed through France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Romania en route to Bulgaria and stayed in existing TJ centers (*marākiz*) or mosques sympathetic to TJ in each of these countries. Travelling by road allowed us to tap into local configurations of TJ knowledge and experience en route. At a French TJ center, for example, we learned that teams of primarily French-Arab-African TJ activists were regularly dispatched to Bulgaria from Paris; in Munich we learned the same thing about German-Turkish TJ groups, albeit on a less frequent scale; and in mosques in Hungary and Romania we learned about

TJ delegations from Italy and Qatar who had recently passed through, one of which was en route to Bulgaria. We were also given the contact details of a key French North-African TJ activist, Jemil,²⁰ who had visited Bulgaria on TJ tours so frequently that he was now fluent in Bulgarian.²¹ In this way, I was able to observe the intricate linkages of TJ's transnational networks of activism operating first-hand.

Islam in Bulgaria has a complex and checkered past. In spite of the state atheism instituted by the Marxist-Leninist communism of the Zhivkov regime and its associated suppression of religious identity markers and forced assimilation campaigns, remnants of Bulgaria's Ottoman Muslim past continue to persist and can be discerned, for example, in the architecture of the mosques as well as the state-sponsored system of the Muftiate. This system appoints a Grand Mufti to preside over an assembly of Regional Muftis who in turn supervise the running of the country's mosques and manage the Islamic affairs of its Muslim peoples. Our first priority upon arrival in the country's capital Sofia was to seek an audience with the Grand Mufti to explain the objectives of our visit and seek permission to work in the country's mosques; though, through the visits of previous TJ groups, we had been informed that the Muftiate was aware of TJ activities in the country and approved them. This decision to seek an early audience with the Grand Mufti is consistent with Gaborieau's analysis in which visiting TJ delegations first meet with the native *ulema* of a country before approaching other segments of society.

Having obtained permission to work in the country's mosques, our time in Bulgaria was divided between the Turkish-Bulgarian Muslim communities inhabiting the slum regions of cities such as Plovdiv and the ethnically indigenous Pomak Muslims inhabiting the Southern mountainous regions. The former were proud of their Turkish ancestry and perpetuated a system of religious leadership in which *Hojjas* functioned as the guides of their communities. We found that two *Hojjas* in particular were key supporters of TJ; one had recently undertaken a four month TJ training trip to the Raiwind headquarters in Pakistan and actually joined our group for over two weeks while the other had volunteered his mosque to function as the country's makeshift TJ markaz. Despite its bare simplicity, the mosque had already acted as the key landing and transit point for numerous incoming TJ groups from a range of countries. I witnessed that both *Hojjas* were wielding their

considerable social and religious influence to popularize TJ among their congregations; and the latter Hojja, we were told, had taken over 100 of his congregation with him to a TJ convocation (*ijtimā'*) recently held in Istanbul. I also noticed the presence, in several mosques, of core TJ texts – such as the *Faḍā'il A'amāl* and the *Muntakhab Ahādīth* – in high quality Turkish language publications.

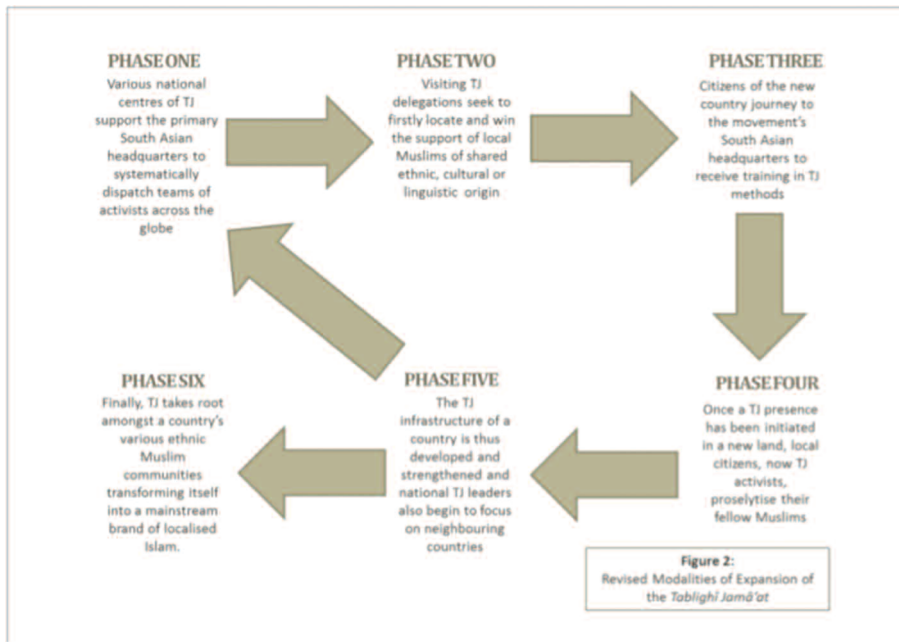
The Pomak Muslims, in contrast to their Turkish-Bulgarian counterparts, were clearly wealthier and sent their religious protégés to Medina to acquire Islamic education. My fieldwork intimated that those appointed to the posts of Regional Mufti had studied abroad, usually in Medina, and invariably hailed from the Pomak Muslim community. Additionally, I was informed that visiting TJ groups from Germany consisting largely of German-Turks would almost exclusively work amongst the Turkish-Bulgarian Muslim communities due to pre-existing ethnic, linguistic and cultural affinities whereas visiting French North African TJ groups would almost exclusively focus on the Pomaks, relying on Regional Muftis and imams to translate from Arabic to Bulgarian. As none of our group spoke either Turkish or Bulgarian, we sought out English translators in each community we visited. It transpired that our translators generally enjoyed a degree of social eminence due to their advanced education – Gaborieau's 'lay intellectuals' – and had often translated for previous incoming TJ groups. I also saw that Medina-trained Pomak *imams* would happily translate for our *amīr* from Arabic to Bulgarian. In particular, Mufti Abd al-Aziz,²² one of the most senior *ulema* in the country, became especially close to our group and, along with a number of his congregation, accompanied us to the mosque of a neighboring town. In situations where neither ethnic, cultural nor linguistic affinities could be evoked, the group relied on the simple yet powerful bonds of Muslim brotherhood and I vividly recall, when translators could not be found, members of our delegation miming and gesticulating animatedly as they attempted to communicate the TJ message to bemused Bulgarian audiences through the medium of an improvised sign language.

Conclusion

Unlike Indonesia or Britain, Bulgaria contains no pre-existing South Asian Muslim diaspora communities and, to my knowledge, has never been visited by a TJ delegation from the South Asian headquarters.²³ Yet some of the key

modalities of expansion identified in Gaborieau's and Noor's accounts can be discerned as operating in the above narrative of my own fieldwork. Firstly, influential *ulema* were contacted and introduced to the objectives of the visiting TJ delegation. Secondly, as can be seen with the focus of the German-Turkish visiting TJ groups, Muslims with shared cultural and ethnic heritages were identified. Thirdly, as can be seen through the activities of our British South Asian group and the French-Arab-African groups, in the absence of shared cultural and ethnic traditions, linguistic affinities were sought out through the common mediums of English or Arabic. Fourthly, it is clear that Bulgarian individuals possessed of social, religious and educational capital are being drawn to TJ, some of whom have already travelled to the movement's South Asian headquarters, and are working to popularize the movement within their spheres of influence in the country. In this way, with some modification to Phases One and Two of my schema, I think it is reasonable to posit that TJ in Bulgaria currently operates broadly at Phase Three.

Most significantly, the trip highlights the institutional robustness and autonomy of the movement's Western branch from its South Asian headquarters. Our group was formed, dispatched and debriefed entirely in Dewsbury with no obvious reference to Nizamuddin or Raiwind; and during my stay at the West Yorkshire headquarters I witnessed numerous other British TJ groups arriving from or departing to various international destinations. The French and German groups seem similarly to operate independently of South Asia; and during our return trip, I witnessed a TJ group form and depart for Switzerland from the Brussels headquarters. It may be that this ostensible autonomy derives in part from what seems to be the movement's global strategy of delegating regional arenas of activity to local headquarters that are geographically and administratively better placed to focus on neighboring countries. In this way, Western European nations with established TJ infrastructures turn a neighborly eye to their Eastern European counterparts – many of whom lag behind, in TJ terms, due to the historical throwback of communism. This implies that the concentration of primary TJ activism to South Asia, as reflected in Phase One of my schema, must now be diffused to regional loci of influence and the cultural affinities mentioned in Phase Two mediated according to local context:



Finally, the age and cultural ambience of my TJ group allows some preliminary speculation about the mechanics through which the future indigenization of TJ in Britain may take place (Phase Six). ‘Religions often enter new and unfamiliar contexts where they undergo subtle changes - or even, depending on their reception, quite dramatic ones,’ points out Peter Mandaville. ‘Much, however, stays the same.’²⁴ Operating on the interface of this ‘inertia and dynamism’²⁵ – and bearing in mind that British Muslims, unlike Javanese ones, exist as a numerical minority and that TJ restricts its activities to Muslim populations only – I would contend that the future trajectory of TJ’s indigenization in Britain will be shaped by the following factors. Firstly, and perhaps primarily given their historical affinity and demographic preponderance,²⁶ the experiences of second and third generation British-born Muslims of South Asian origin who are drawn to the movement will be critical. Secondly, the extent to which TJ is able to shed its South Asian demeanor and be appropriated by increasingly diverse communities of non-South Asian Muslims resident in, for example, London will be important.²⁷ Thirdly, the extent to which the movement is able to accommodate British converts to the faith will determine its future socio-cultural ambience. Each of these factors requires further research and my ongoing fieldwork hopes to provide a framework for understanding better the ways in which the movement may develop in future.

Notes

¹ For instance see Christian W. Troll, “Five Letters of Maulana Ilyas (1885-1944), the Founder of the Tablighi Jama’at - Translated, Annotated and Introduced,” in *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries 2*, ed. Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), 138-76; Francis Robinson, “Other-Worldly and This-Worldly Islam and the Islamic Revival,” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Third Series)* 14, no. 01 (2004), 47-58; or Zacharias Pieri, *Tablighi Jamaat - Handy Books on Religion in World Affairs* (London: Lapido Media, 2012).

² Barbara Metcalf, *Traditional Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis and Talibs* (Leiden: ISIM, 2002), 2.

³ Metcalf provides the preeminent account of the development of the Deobandi school: Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁴ For accounts of Ilyas’s life and the early development of TJ see Anwarul M. Haq, *The Faith Movement of Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1972); Yoginder S. Sikand, *The Origins and Development of Tablighi-Jama’at (1920–2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study* (Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman, 2002); or Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Life and Mission of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas* (Lucknow, India: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1983).

⁵ Yoginder S. Sikand, “The Reformist Sufism of the Tablighi Jama’at: The Case of the Meos of Mewat, India,” in *Sufism and the ‘Modern’ in Islam*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 129.

⁶ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226-27.

⁷ Marc Gaborieau, “The Transformation of Tablighi Jama’at into a Transnational Movement” in *Travellers In Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama’at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), 134-135.

⁸ Marloes Janson, *Islam, Youth and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama’at* (The International African Library. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁹ Farish. A. Noor, *The Spread of the Tablighi Jama’at Across Western, Central and Eastern Java and the role of the Indian Muslim Diaspora* (Working Paper 175. Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2009).

¹⁰ Farish. A. Noor, *Islam on the Move: The Tablighi Jama’at in Southeast Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

¹¹ Noor, *The Spread of the Tablighi Jama’at*, 48.

¹² Yoginder S. Sikand, *The Origins and Development of Tablighi-Jama’at (1920–2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study* (Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman, 2002), 217

¹³ See Muhammad Khalid Masud, “Ideology and Legitimacy” in *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama’at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), 108-110; and Azizur-Rahman Bijnori, *Biography of*

Hadhrat Moulana Muhammad Yusuf Sahib - Amire Tabligh (Azaadville, South Africa: Madrasah Arabia Islamia, 2002), 196-200.

¹⁴ For accounts of the historical development of TJ within Britain see Ron Geaves, *Sectarian Influences within Islam in Britain with Reference to the Concepts of 'Ummah' and 'Community'* (University of Leeds: Community Religions Project, 1996); Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims* (London: I.B.Taurus, 1994); Elke Faust, "Close Ties and New Boundaries: Tablighi Jama'at in Britain and Germany" in *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000), ch. 6; Yoginder S. Sikand, "The Origins and Growth of the Tablighi Jamaat in Britain." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 9, no. 2 (1998), 171-92.

¹⁵ John King, "Tablighi Jamaat and the Deobandi Mosques in Britain" in *Global Religious Movements in Regional Context*, ed. John Wolffe (Bath: Ashgate Publishing Ltd in association with The Open University, 2002);

¹⁶ Zacharias Pieri, *Tablighi Jamaat - Handy Books on Religion in World Affairs* (London: Lapido Media, 2012), 30

¹⁷ Sikand, *The Origins and Development of Tablighi-Jama'at (1920–2000)*, 251.

¹⁸ Reflexive ethnography is an increasingly widespread method of contemporary qualitative fieldwork. Interested readers may peruse any of the following: Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1999); Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. Second ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004); Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Third ed. (London: Routledge, 2007); Raymond Madden, *Being Ethnographic* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2010); James P. Spradley, *Participant Observation* (Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 1980).

¹⁹ The *am r* was actually of mixed race ancestry with an Indian-Gujarati migrant grandfather and a white Irish Christian grandmother.

²⁰ Pseudonym

²¹ While these lines may give the impression that there is a concerted TJ focus on Bulgaria, it was only because our group was travelling to Bulgaria that we were concerned to find out about previous TJ experiences in that country specifically.

²² Pseudonym

²³ This is probably due, in large part, to the restrictions imposed by the communist regime.

²⁴ Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 112.

²⁵ Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 117.

²⁶ The 2011 Census recorded that 68% of the UK's 2.7 million Muslim population were from an Asian background and that Muslims have the youngest age profile of the main religious groups with 48% aged under 25. See www.ons.gov.uk.

²⁷ In this regard, Zacharias Pieri, who conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork on TJ in London, cites the results of a 2010 survey carried out by UK-based consultancy firm Ecorys at the London TJ headquarters – 'the first and only official source of the composition of attendees' – to demonstrate 'a strong trend to a youthful population (41% 20-29 years of age) and a growing ethnic diversity (Bangladeshi 32%, Pakistani 35%, Black African 17%, Indian 11%).' See Zacharias Pieri, *Tablighi Jamaat - Handy Books on Religion in World Affairs* (London: Lapido Media, 2012), 30-31. Mandaville cites London as an example of a 'global city', part of a series of 'polyglot metropolises [which] bear witness to extraordinary processes of identity (re)formation and sociocultural melange – as well as providing an abundance of material for the morphology of cultural dynamics'; see Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 18.

Concluding Remarks

MAURITZ BERGER

I must confess that I am not a fan of conferences or symposia. The participants are usually more interested in giving their presentation and spending the remainder of the time sitting in the back of the audience with their laptop opened. But the symposium of young scholars who presented their research during a weekend in May 2014 in Cambridge was one of those rare occasions that everyone was infected by a synergy of enthusiasm and active involvement. Participants were listening attentively to each other and engaging in discussions and Q&As.

Was it the diversity of the people present? The variety of topics? The quality of the presentations? I guess it was a combination of this all. Surely, the presentations given that weekend represent a unique state of the academic art in the domain of Islam in Europe, and provide us with new inroads for research in the study of Islam in Europe. Let me try to give a brief overview of why I think that is the case.

De-securitisation

First and foremost, it should be noted that none of the research topics were related to issues of security. This is quite remarkable. The attacks of 9/11 and subsequent attacks by Muslim extremists in European cities had drastically changed the research agenda of Islam in Europe. Ever since, most of the research on Islam and Muslims in Europe became embedded in the overall theme of security. This situation was not necessarily by scholarly design, but often prompted by the practical circumstance that national research funds during this period tended to prefer research proposals that had relevance to practical needs of the time.

One of the prominent scholars in the field, Jørgen S. Nielsen, remarked in 2012: 'My own simple thematic search on the website of the UK Economic and Social Research Council using the search term 'Islam' in the category

‘Security and conflict’ indicates that no research grants meeting these criteria were awarded in the period 1982 (when the record starts) till 2000, although if all subject categories are included there were 18 grants. If, however, the same search is made for the years 2001 till the present, it appears that a total of 40 research grants were awarded in all categories, of which 32 were in the category ‘Security and conflict’¹

Several years ago, Professor Thijl Sunier (Amsterdam University), Professor Nielsen and myself organized a two-day meeting in Leiden of all European professors specialized in Islam in Europe in order to come to a strategy to change this securitization of the research agenda. We unanimously agreed that we should not be deterred by the security-demands set upon us by research funds but should jointly commit to our own standards. Unfortunately – and unexpectedly - the meeting came to naught because quite a few colleagues were unwilling to put their names to a joint statement in which we would declare our intentions. The fear of repercussions – political, financial, safety – was too great.

But nothing of this somberness could be found with the younger generation at the Cambridge symposium. In their academic research projects they were actively engaging with numerous aspects of Islam and Muslims in Europe, but none of this was security related. This is a positive sign because it shows an awareness that Muslims and Islam in Europe are much more than security-related objects of study.

Diversity and Self-reflection of Participants

The second aspect of the symposium that I found remarkable was the diversity of the participants. And with ‘diversity’ I mean all the facets of that word. For one, there was the number of disciplines represented among the participants: law, history, sociology, psychology, theology, anthropology. It definitely caused quite some miscommunication and misunderstandings, but also contributed to new insights and the awareness of different approaches that could be taken to a topic.

The other aspect of diversity was the people themselves: male and female, Muslim and non-Muslim, believer and unbeliever, activists and impassionate academics, and from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. While this appeared to be a completely natural environment for the participants, I must stress that

this is a unique situation for several reasons. Of course, it is in this, the first generation of European academics, where we witness such a mixture of backgrounds. But more importantly, it is precisely this mix that will contribute to a much better understanding of Islam and Muslims in Europe. A Muslim female researcher with a headscarf will have access to certain communities where others do not. And vice versa, of course. Ethnicity, language, culture or religion are qualities that may give a researcher an extra advantage – or a handicap, for that matter – compared to others. Comparing the observations and insights from these different angles is what makes diversity in the academic world an asset.

Diversity of researchers, when strategically present in the academy, will therefore yield much more information than we would otherwise be able to disclose. And there is more. Those researchers who share certain qualities with their subject of research will, because of their academic training, be aware of the risk of bias, subjectivity, or social desirability. This, in turn, demands a rigid form of self-reflection, a methodological requirement that is well-known in anthropology. I was quite impressed by the degree of self-reflection undertaken by many of the participants. In particular Muslims who belonged to a certain community or sect and conducted research within that group displayed an acute awareness of their position and some had developed interesting means of maintaining their academic distance and integrity. I suspect that this may very well contribute to new theoretical and methodological insights in this particular form of academic research.

A Treasure Trove of Topics

The other diversity I encountered was a diversity of topics. As mentioned, none of them were security-related. But what a richness and broadness! From rituals of burial and use of religion in psychological therapy to political participation and minority *fiqh*. Are there patterns or domains that can be discerned here? Yes and no. No, because these topics cover all aspects of life. But yes, there are typical Islamic dimensions to these aspects of life. To put it differently: Islam has become of importance to Muslims in Europe in an increasing number of aspects of their lives. Whether this is ‘Islam’ as a theological dogma, a social construct, an invented tradition or an identity is something I leave open for discussion, but let us establish the fact of its importance to Muslims, even to those who are not devout. And this is perhaps one of the most fascinating observations one can make in this symposium

(observations that are corroborated in earlier findings): Muslims in Europe are developing their own lifestyles at a tremendous pace, and in almost all domains of life. These lifestyles do not necessarily have to be religious, but they are definitely rooted in what is called ‘Islam’.

Where to go from here?

It is tempting on this kind of occasion to make additions to the list of topics that had been presented at academic gatherings. Even the impressive number of topics presented during this symposium can be extended. The phrase used in such instances would be something like: “Other fields that deserve exploration are...” I will refrain from that. Why add to the treasure chest when it is already full? What we need is not breadth, but depth; and we should not ask ourselves what more, but how else.

Not breadth but Depth

What I find fascinating about the diversity of topics presented at the symposium is that they do not only tell us so much about Muslims in Europe, but also present us with a picture of how they – apparently – deviate from what is considered conventional in the European societies they live in. Whether that deviation is only in form or also in content and meaning is a question that I will leave open for discussion. It is this juxtaposition of values, lifestyles, conventions, and (invented) traditions that I find worth exploring. It touches upon the notion of Otherness that I addressed elsewhere,² but also on notions that I suggest to call ‘Reflexivity’ and ‘Alternative Culture’.

By Reflexivity I mean the process of action and reaction that appears to be continuously at play in the interactions between Muslims in Europe and their European societies. With any topic related to behavior of or demands by Muslims we might ask: what do Muslims want that, and why in that form? The answers are commonly sought in theological doctrine: Muslims claim the freedom to fulfill a religious duty, politicians discuss whether that is in accordance to Scripture, and other Muslims wonder whether this is ‘true’ Islam. But while this doctrine serves as the source of authority, the appeals made to that source are often driven by other motivations than pure dogma.

Let us take marriage as an example. Devout Muslims claim that they want an ‘Islamic marriage’. According to Islamic legal doctrine, that is a civil, albeit

sacred bond, constituted by offer and acceptance between bride and groom in the presence of two (male) witnesses. So why do so many Muslims want to conclude their marriage in the presence of an *imam*? Is that a tradition from their parents' country, or a copy of a Christian marriage? And why do so many of these devout Muslims become defensive when I suggest that a marriage at the civil registrar is actually an Islamic marriage as it fulfills the requirements of Islamic law? To my mind, the 'Islamic marriage' is not a religious-legal construct anymore but has become a focus point of Islamic identity in a hostile European environment. And this environment in turn – as I said: action and reaction – gets concerned about these 'Islamic marriages' that are interpreted by some as clear statements of non-conformation to European society.

It is this Reflexivity that I find worth exploring: Muslims do or want something, the European environment reacts, and the Muslims counter that reaction. Often one cannot discern anymore what came first: are the wishes and doings of Muslims on their own initiative, or prompted by their environment, or a logical consequence of their status as migrants lost between cultures, or otherwise? Moreover, the notion of Reflexivity tells us sometimes perhaps even more about the European environment than about Muslims themselves. And that is when we come to the point that I consider most important of all, namely that Muslims and Islam to my mind cannot be studied as independent units but must always be considered in connection – and reflection – of their environment.

The other notion that I find of importance and worth exploring is what I suggest to call 'Alternative Culture'. This notion is of a completely different order, as it is of more relevance to activists than to academics. Nonetheless it is of importance because this is where academics can contribute to societal needs. What I mean by the notion of Alternative Culture is that Muslims in Europe, because of their special situation, are developing new forms of coping with life that may serve as an example or alternative to the conventional ways of European life. One example is that of religion in (or should I call it: religious) psychological therapy: while this appears to be a helpful approach towards quite some devout Muslims in psychological distress, it may also serve as an approach to other faithful subjects. In a society that has become increasingly secular to the extent that it is sometimes anti-religious, such an approach may yield unexpected results.

Another example is that of marital counseling: while in European societies such counseling is only called for when a couple is on the brink of divorce, Muslims in Europe have developed other and new means to cope with their search for (limitedly available) partners, their problems with disagreeing parents, the need for a marriage contract that is both Islamic and just, the challenge of an Islamic family life in a non-Islamic environment, etc., etc. In other words, ‘marital counseling’ among European Muslims is much more comprehensive and integrated, covering all aspects of marital life from partner choice to marriage crisis, and consequently involving psychologists as well as lawyers, believers as well as non-believers. A view that, to my mind, may also be applicable – and appealing! – to contemporary European society where such choices may be free but still create similar problems.

Not: What more, But: What else?

As I said, I think it is of little use to make any suggestions on what more needs to be studied as so much is already being covered. Rather than discussing *what more* needs to be done, I prefer to make suggestions of *how else* we can work with what we already have. This is where my frustration comes in that so little will remain of all the great work that is being done by academic researchers, because only a few will acquaint themselves with all the great stories they have to tell. How can we make sure that these stories remain, and reach a larger audience?

It is for that reason that during this symposium I came up with the idea of getting researchers on Islam in Europe together to make short (10-15 minutes) documentaries of their work. Such a project would serve various purposes.

- *Outreach/valorization*: the making of short documentaries is a way of ‘translating’ academic findings in a manner that is accessible to the non-academic public.
- *Experimenting with new forms of academic output*: The academic is used to convey his/her findings either by writing or orally. This project will add a visual dimension.
- *Creation of synergy among academics*: The topics of the documentaries will

enable the academics to work together on short projects (the making of one documentary) on joint topics.

- *Independence of information dissemination*: The researchers and their universities can set their own agenda of what they deem interesting and newsworthy.

To me, this idea has been the most exciting and practical outcome of the symposium. In the weeks after the symposium, I have decided that I will work on this in the coming year to make it into a concrete project and so contribute to an alternative way of advancing the academic domain of Islam in Europe.

Notes

¹ Book Reviews, *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, 2012 (Vol.1), p.217). *Topics*.

² *A Brief History of Islam in Europe*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014.

Concluding Remarks

JEREMY HENZELL-THOMAS

This has been a very rich experience and it has been a privilege to be with you to share your research endeavors. Thank you all.

Let me try to unwrap some of the major themes which have emerged from the wealth of your research studies, and perhaps also to point to some directions for future research. Given the range and depth of your work, I can only hope to traverse the landscape in a somewhat cursory and unsystematic way, pointing here and there to some major landmarks and responding personally in the light of what I have learned and what has inspired me in your splendid presentations.

First of all, we have seen repeatedly in this symposium a very creative and liberating trend seeking to challenge, counter and subvert prevailing discourses about Islam and Muslims. Such discourses, typically predictable and pre-structured, are repeated interminably and with little reflection on the ‘mainstream’ public stage. You have described many of their characteristics and limitations, as well as proposing ways in which they can be effectively countered, and even turned on their heads. Of particular note is the persistent tendency to resort to outmoded dichotomies rooted in fixed frames of thought, as well as the stranglehold of established power relations and imposed identities.

One might add to this the notion of the ‘narrative fallacy’ introduced by the trader-philosopher-statistician Nassim Taleb in his popular book, *The Black Swan*.¹ Referring to this at the beginning of the chapter entitled ‘The Illusion of Understanding’ in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Nobel Prize winning economist Daniel Kahneman refers to narrative fallacies as ‘flawed stories of the past’ which ‘shape our views of the world and our expectations for the future.’² They are simple (even simplistic) but compelling explanatory stories which arise from our continuous attempt to make sense of the world.

In the same way, we know from the psychology of perception that the human mind tends to see what it wants or expects to see. It is well attested that even the very ‘rational’ scientific community is susceptible to confirmation bias. When presented with visual illusions which have two possible and equally logical explanations, subjects prefer to disambiguate them on the basis of their familiar knowledge of the world. Thus, a picture depicting a staircase which could, according to strict spatial logic, be interpreted as either a normal ascending staircase or an upside-down descending staircase (suitable only for flies) will typically be interpreted by subjects as the former. Such perceptual preferences are of course necessary and understandable. Without the rapid automatic routines generated by top-down processing we would not be able to function in the world, for we would have to analyze everything laboriously from the bottom-up as if we were encountering it for the first time.

Marshalling Evidence in the Pursuit of Truth

The survival benefits of rapid processing are obvious, and dichotomization is itself embedded in us to some degree as a means to judge and act decisively. By contrast, the armchair philosopher who scrutinizes the logical minutiae of every proposition, absorbs every qualification, respects every position, and agonizes over every minor dissonance and nuance may never get out of his chair. But we surely have to distinguish between the positive dynamics of familiar ‘stories’ which help us to bestow coherence and order on the world and their negative repercussions in the ingrained human tendency to espouse one-sided tribalism, bigotry, and prejudice. Challenging the mechanical perseveration of one-dimensional thinking and divisive ‘scripts’ must be one of our most important functions as researchers at the cutting edge of the ‘Academy’ – wedded to the disinterested pursuit of truth and the excavation, marshaling and critical evaluation of evidence. And this function is always greater than a merely adversarial or rhetorical one which seeks to subvert for its own sake or defend a position at all costs. It is rooted in the process of dialectic – that intellectually honest critical engagement with alternative views, competing arguments and contradictory evidence. It was Plato who said that dialectic is immeasurably superior to rhetoric as a means of persuasion, and that holds true today as surely as it did in his Academy.

The refreshing alternative perspectives grounded in evidence that you have offered remind me in many ways of the same trend that can be seen in many non-mainstream blogs and independent media. One has to ask why the

Russia Today (RT) TV station has overtaken the BBC as the most-watched non-American TV station in the USA. The answer is that 90% of the US media is dominated by six corporations which tightly control the flow of information. Intelligent and inquiring Americans are looking elsewhere for stories and comment which offer a genuinely alternative view of the world (which is not to say, of course, that RT and other alternative media are not free of their own biases). The same goes for the UK. Nick Davies, lamenting the debasement of journalism in Britain today, points out in his analysis of over 2000 UK news pieces gleaned from the quality papers (and the *Daily Mail*) that only 12 per cent consisted of a story that a reporter had found out and pursued on his or her own initiative or checked the facts. The rest is all rewritten wire copy (mostly from a single source, the Press Association) and PR. Davies coined the stinging word ‘churnalism’ to describe 88 per cent of what people read even in the posh papers.³ One review of Davies’ book summed up its findings like this: ‘The British news media are crushed by commercial pressure, squeezed by the need for speed, corrupted by PR, indifferent to their own best traditions of independence, recklessly indifferent to the central functions of reporting and checking facts, systematically lied to by commercial interests and governments, and, in far too many respects, simply indifferent to the truth.’⁴ And a professor of journalism concluded that ‘the prevalence of a culture of shallowness, negativity, and cavalier carelessness in checking facts is exerting a corrosive influence on public life and breeding a toxic cynicism in the public mind’.⁵

In the wake of the recent ‘Trojan Horse’ furor over the supposed ‘Islamist plot’ to ‘take over’ Birmingham schools and the debate about ‘British values’ which it has provoked, a similar critique of the irresponsibility of the press and politicians has been widely voiced, as in this statement on British Values and British Muslims on the website of the Islamic Human Rights Commission:

‘...the people of Britain, Muslim and non-Muslim, have been badly let down by our media and by our politicians. With few exceptions, in news item after news item, in program after program, the sound bite and the rumor, the circumstantial and the sensationalized have dominated headlines and stories trumping evidence and critical scrutiny; uninformed and tendentious voices have hollowed out the space of debate to the exclusion of saner, more informed, and critical voices, and cast whole communities under suspicion.

Our journalists have failed us because they have failed to report responsibly, to question critically, to probe the evidence and critically inform readers and viewers, rather than merely repeat and amplify sinister imputations, rumor, distortion and suspicion. Our politicians, local and national, have failed us because they have failed to provide real leadership: the kind of

leadership that proactively challenges scaremongering and suspicion, fosters trust and strengthens resilience in communities besieged by outside media and political wrangling....⁶

Improving the quality of public discourse not only depends on reclaiming amongst journalists a culture which reveres the disinterested pursuit of truth, respects evidence, and rejects the fabrication of ‘pseudo-events’, but also on the reclamation of the same principles amongst those who do research and compile reports for think tanks. A succession of reports produced by some think tanks has been criticized as being ideologically motivated with ‘findings’ not based on the methodological integrity which should govern fair and balanced research and the gathering of credible evidence.⁷

We have heard also in this symposium how discourse around British Muslim communities is often devoid of empirical evidence, with overuse of anecdotal evidence and small sample sizes, reliance on limited research designs, and frequent resort to the rhetoric which characterizes political and polemical discourse rather than responsible analysis and comment.

In contrast, the range of research methodologies you have shared with us has been impressive, encompassing strict quantitative analysis and various types of qualitative and ethnographic studies, including audio recordings of interviews, focus groups, and case studies. Of particular interest is the reported use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) which strives to bypass the hierarchical researcher-subject relationship (and the associated monopoly on ownership of knowledge) through interactive methods which seek to avoid the traps of researcher subjectivity, preconceived categories, confirmation bias, and the like, and involve participants creatively in generating the research design. Such approaches affirm the importance of the micro-social (everyday, individual) level rather than the strategic macro-social perspective (e.g, the focus on a ‘community’ or nation state) which excludes significant constituencies.

One important direction which emerged from your discussions about methodology is the need for deeper insights gained from probing research designs which combine both quantitative and qualitative methodology and thus address some of the limitations imposed by the inadequate frameworks for measurement and analysis within qualitative studies.

Challenging Prevailing Discourses

It is one thing to gain awareness of the debilitating distortions often exercised by prevailing discourses and the way in which they create and reinforce prejudice, but in this symposium you have gone further in offering concrete ways in which such discourse can be constructively challenged.

We have heard how *mediating concepts* such as social ethics and civil society can help in bridging those stark dualisms such as faith and public life, *din* and *dunya*, which are often seen to be in a state of high tension, if not completely irreconcilable.

We have been shown how *counterpublics* challenge pre-structured public discourse, deconstruct rigid binaries, and propose creative self-definitions as authentic alternatives to imposed identities. Two examples come to mind from the presentations we have heard, both exercised by Muslim women: the striking semiotic subversion of making the veil an empowering symbol of liberation from hegemonic clichés, and engagement in hip-hop not only to counter the invisibility of Muslim women within the hip-hop scene but also to challenge the negative aspects of the mainstream hip-hop industry.

And we have been given illuminating examples of how the crucially important discipline of *critical discourse analysis* can expose the way in which attitudes and prejudices are learned through text and talk even at the subliminal level. We have heard during this symposium how the strategic action of discourse is dependent on the psychological disposition of the audience, but this is a reciprocal process in that the psychological disposition is itself conditioned by the discourse. Of special interest here was the keynote lecture by Costas Gabrielatos on the representation of Islam in the British press. Drawing on his meticulous work in the field of corpus linguistics, he revealed the insistent drip-feed of collocations, both explicit and implicit (e.g. between Islam and ‘terrorism’) in the British press which inevitably conditions public attitudes. It is a sad fact that if you repeat something enough times like a mantra, it becomes a ‘script’, a formulaic structure so embedded in the mind that it becomes highly resistant, and even impervious, to modification. The effectiveness of rhetorical manipulation through repetitive phrases is of course well-known by politicians and spin doctors, in the same way that slogans and jingles are the stock-in-trade of advertising.

Repetition is one of a variety of discursive moves and ploys identified in the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Teun van Dijk, for example, has rigorously examined how discourse promotes and sustains racism by promoting prejudiced social representations shared by dominant groups (usually white, European) and based on ideologies of superiority and difference. An example is his detailed analysis of some fragments of a book misleadingly entitled *The End of Racism* by Dinesh D'Souza,⁸ a book which embodies many of the dominant Eurocentric supremacist ideologies in the USA, and which specifically targets one minority group: African Americans. This book is one of the main documents of conservative ideology in the USA and has had considerable influence on the debates on affirmative action, welfare, multiculturalism, and immigration, and on the formulation of policy to restrict the rights of minority groups and immigrants.

In relation to the collocations between words excavated by Costas, it also occurred to me that a useful line of research could be a similar investigation into the persistent associations between words and images which are a feature of press reports on Islam and Muslims. How often have we seen a news story on 'Islamic terrorism' or 'Islamist extremism' accompanied by a library photo of Muslims praying in a mosque? The persistent association of extremism and violence with an iconic representation of the act of prayer necessarily conveys the implication that violence is part and parcel of the Muslim faith. This collocation was even more explicitly expressed by the BBC's political editor Nick Robinson when he unthinkingly quoted a Whitehall source who described the Woolwich killers of the soldier Lee Rigby as being 'of Muslim appearance'⁹ He subsequently apologized.

Let me go a little further and suggest some ways in which the creative directions you have given us might be extended:

1. *Amplifying Impact in the Public Domain*

There is a need for more research into the ways in which all such creative directions and positive trends can be amplified and achieve greater impact in the public domain. In other words, how can academic researchers get their message across in readable language to policy makers and the wider public? The Center of Islamic Studies here at the University of Cambridge made a useful start on this in a conference entitled *Acknowledging a Shared Past to Build a Shared Future: Rethinking Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations*, convened jointly with the British Council from March 29-31, 2012.¹⁰

This highlighted in many ways the radically different objectives and methods of academic researchers and media professionals. Some maintain that the function of the Academy should be the acquisition of knowledge and that this should not be compromised or muddied by engagement in ‘activism’; neither should the richness and complexity of its thinking and language be ‘dumbed down’ so as to produce ‘simple stories’ for popular consumption.

Conversely, it can be argued that academics have a duty to go beyond talking to one another and reach out so as to contribute actively to the improvement of public discourse for the common good. After all, academics have played their part in engendering hostility and conflict, and by the same token they can do much to prevent it. The toxic Balkan sympathies of Anders Breivik, the Norwegian ideologue who killed 69 people in a mass shooting on the island of Utoya on July 22, 2011, should forcefully remind us that it was the strategic deployment of language as an instrument of ideology that enabled the Serbs to create a straw-man Islam and Muslim stereotype. And it was Serbian ‘orientalist’ academics who, by bending scholarship and blending it with divisive political rhetoric, demonized Islam in such a way as to contribute significantly to creating a condition of virtual paranoia and making genocide acceptable. They did so by stereotyping and labeling all Muslims as ‘Islamic fundamentalists’, and by setting and emphasizing cultural markers which differentiated, isolated and scapegoated Islam and Muslims as alien, threatening, culturally and morally inferior, or perversely exotic. And what allowed them to play such a role? It was ‘the extensive media exposure they enjoyed in Serbia’, as much as ‘their participation in official propaganda campaigns abroad’.¹¹

The Qur’an likens the good word to a good tree, *firmly rooted, reaching out with its branches towards the sky*. In this conception of language, the letter is not an inanimate component of an abstract concept, but is a living entity, and the words which are formed from these letters, the phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs, have the power to diminish or enhance our humanity. The word is in fact a deed, an act in itself, which carries the same responsibility as that taken in doing and acting. The expression ‘in word and deed’ encapsulates this wisdom, this convergence between speech and action. The best speech transcends mere eloquence, for just as the ‘devil has the best tunes’, so he may also use the smartest or most glittering words. After all, the word ‘*dajjal*’ (‘impostor’ or ‘false prophet’) comes from the Arabic root which has the concrete sense of ‘spreading tar on a mangy camel’ so as to hide what is rotten

beneath a smooth appearance, and make it more saleable. Fine discourse is not covering, spinning or embellishing the truth, and least of all is it a means of inciting harm, but it is responsible social action in the service of humanity.

2. Becoming a Creative Minority

There is a need, I believe, for more attention on the ways in which Muslims, rooted in spiritual values, can act as a creative minority within a wider society to act for the common good, to work for social and economic justice, and to contribute to the educational and cultural development of all our citizens. Engagement in public discourse is one way in which such intentions might be realized, but there are many others. We have heard today about the positive impact of Muslim women engaging with the hip-hop scene to restore its original focus on social justice. This is one aspect of the increasing visibility of young Muslims in the media and cultural life. It has been strongly asserted that to thrive within Europe, 'it is not possible to think of a Muslim presence without nourishing and encouraging an artistic and cultural expression which is an alternative to a popular culture that does not often care about ethics or dignity'.¹²

Let me add another example from my own recent experience. I enjoyed a recent trip to the Yorkshire Moors to give the keynote address on 'Spirituality and the Outdoors' at an equity symposium organized by the British Mountaineering Council (in conjunction with Mountain Muslim) as part of their outreach program for Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) communities. Most of the participants were from the Muslim communities in the neighboring industrial towns of Bradford, Keighley and Halifax. I was so impressed and heartened to see so many young Muslims (including many young women) so enthusiastically involved in outdoor pursuits, not only as leaders, practitioners, instructors and community activists, but also as environmentalists and lovers of the natural world. This brought home once again how young Muslims are striking out in new ways to expand their horizons.

3. Finding out what Works

I believe we need more research into what actually works in healing the divisions caused by prejudiced discourse. We can track collocations, for instance, through discourse analysis, but how do we change the mindsets that give rise to them? Finding convergence and mutuality through shared values is one way, and bringing people together in active intercultural engagement so as to discover their common humanity is another. The latter can be especially transformational, because it goes beyond the conceptual level, engaging the whole being and opening the heart. Visual media, including films and documentaries, may also have high impact, but research is needed into their long-term effect on enhancing understanding and reframing perceptions.

The provision of better information and education is also of fundamental

importance, but it has to be said that their impact on mindsets is highly variable. This is because the rigid schemata, fixed frames, and bigoted attitudes associated with the foreclosed mind can be deep-seated psychological fixations which are very difficult to dislodge. We may sometimes be dealing not simply with a deficit in knowledge but an often intractable psychological problem. I recall that on the day I arrived in Washington DC several years ago to take part in a meeting on how to 'reframe perceptions' of Islam in the USA, there was an article in the *Washington Post* which described how mental health professionals in the USA, including psychiatrists, are finding such an increase in extreme fear and suspicion of the 'other' that they believe it has reached a stage in the national consciousness where it has become an identifiable pathology which needs to be described and treated as a mental illness. Its main symptoms are irrational prejudice, a constant feeling of threat, and an incapacitating sense of isolation.

Genuine learning depends on the capacity of human faculties to assimilate new input and modify existing cognitive structures. Skill in engaging in discourse requires an understanding that schemata are not typically dislodged by adversarial confrontation, but by approximating new information as far as possible to an existing schema. In other words, the possibility of moving forward depends on finding common ground, an area within the landscape of discourse where there is some intersection of ideas, framed in language that is accessible to both sides. In such a way, new ideas are assimilated and perceptions reframed. Whole paradigms of thought can be shifted in this way.

There are other, more radical ways in various spiritual traditions of bypassing the conditioned mind. These include *koan-training* in Zen Buddhism, by which a paradox or conundrum is meditated upon so as to loosen dependence on reason and provoke an intuitive leap, a flash of enlightenment. There is also the corpus of humorous tales about Mulla Nasrudin known throughout the Middle East. These stories may be understood at any one of many depths, not only as joke and moral, but also, like the *koan*, as a means of shifting habits of thought that impede more subtle states of consciousness.¹³

It would be valuable to explore the full range of methodologies by which the mind can be liberated from or shaken out of fixed attitudes. To do so requires an interdisciplinary approach which takes on board some of the insights derived from empirically-based cognitive science, as well as the wider experiential dimension of spiritual psychology, especially within the Sufi

traditions. I fully respect why Costas, as a linguist, sticks to a strict corpus-based quantitative analysis of collocations and is wary about coming to any conclusions about the mentality which provokes or is provoked by them. As he says, he is not a 'mind-reader'. Such robust research is immensely valuable, but as a psycholinguist I cannot avoid searching for ways in which such research can link up with other disciplines to provide us with ways of understanding how mindsets can be changed.

4. *Insisting on Clarity in the Definition of Key Terms*

A recurrent theme during the symposium was the importance of clear definition of key terms. Lack of this is one of the chief causes of muddled thinking in public discourse. This takes various forms, including lack of distinction between different meanings of the same word. Poor understanding of foreign terms is also a major problem, represented in a strikingly repetitive way by misuse of terms such as *fatwa* and *jihad*. Sometimes terminology is also deliberately manipulated to reinforce power relations.

A striking example which came up during the discussion of one paper was what it means to be identified as 'belonging to a religion'. This has particular relevance in light of the recent controversy provoked by statements about Britain being a Christian country. Does it refer to those who actively practice a religion, or does it also include those nominal adherents who base their religious identity on what they perceive as their historical heritage?

Another topical example of muddling different meanings of the same word is the use of the word 'multiculturalism'. The word might refer to at least three different notions: first, the existence of plurality or diversity ('multiculturality'); second, the model of multiculturalism which promotes tolerance between separate communities within plural societies (sometimes referred to as 'plural monoculturalism'); and third, pluralism as an active process of constructive engagement between different communities (sometimes called 'interculturalism'). While some might legitimately argue that social cohesion and the building of a shared narrative is not facilitated by mere tolerance between isolated encampments within society, it is profoundly misleading to appear to suggest that multiculturalism in its critically important sense of active intercultural engagement is dead. Lack of care in distinguishing such concepts can have profoundly negative consequences not only for minority communities but also for wider society.

The word 'secularism' also came up several times during the symposium.

Important discussions ensued about what kind of secularism was meant: ‘procedural’ or ‘ideological’ secularism. The former is sometimes also referred to as ‘passive’ and ‘pluralist’, and the latter as ‘assertive’ and ‘corporatist’. Procedural secularism protects the equal rights of all citizens, while freely allowing religious citizens to participate fully and robustly in open debate in the public sphere. As such, it has brought many benefits to humanity, ensuring religious and political freedoms for minorities. Ideological secularism, on the other hand, attempts to exclude or rigorously control religious voices and institutions in the public (and even the private) sphere. It has led to tyrannical and oppressive rule in some parts of the world, including the Middle East.¹⁴

5. *Recognizing the Importance of Faith, Spirituality and the Humanities*

A vitally important insight which repeatedly emerged during the symposium was that Muslim consciousness cannot be understood in terms of the social or cultural markers of identity assumed in so much Eurocentric analysis. Islam is a religion and a spiritual path, and is therefore concerned above all else with metaphysical identity and transcendence. This came through strongly in the Center’s report on female conversion to Islam, where one of the striking conclusions was that ‘spirituality is at the heart of the participants’ relationship with Islam’.¹⁵ There is a need for more research studies to bring this out and not get trapped in the terms, conditions and expectations of culturally determined concepts and terminologies, with their conventional mental and social taxonomies all too often focused on ‘us’ and ‘them’.

In the same way, more research on the engagement of Muslim communities in the arts, the humanities and the natural world is of vital importance at a time when education in all these areas is being increasingly marginalized or even eradicated in the mainstream education system.¹⁶

I would like to end with that appeal for the restoration of a holistic education system which values all that makes us fully human. The work you have shared with us at this symposium goes a long way toward identifying some of the creative trends which can be an integral part of that vision.

Notes

¹ Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007).

² Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 199.

³ Nick Davies, *Flat Earth News* (London: Vintage, 2008).

⁴ John Lanchester, “Riots, Terrorism etc.” (Review of Nick Davies’s *Flat Earth News*), in *London*

Review of Books, Vol. 30, No. 5 (March 2008), 3-5. See <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n05/john-lanchester/riots-terrorism-etc>

⁵ Brian Cathcart, "A Dirty Game, but Thousands Want to Play," in *New Statesman*, February 11, 2008. Brian Cathcart is Professor of Journalism at the University of Kingston.

⁶ Adboolkarim Vakil, *British Values and British Muslims*, accessed at <http://www.ihrc.org.uk/>

⁷ An example is the Civitas (Institute for the Study of Civil Society) report, *Music, Chess and other Sins: Segregation, Integration, and Muslim Schools in Britain* (2009) by Denis MacEoin.

⁸ Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism* (New York City: The Free Press, 1995). For a critical analysis of this book, see Teun A. Van Dijk, *News as Discourse* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum), 1988. See also <http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Critical%20discourse%20analysis.pdf>

⁹ See <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2329777/BBC-political-editor-Nick-Robinsons-extraordinary-apology-backlash-Muslim-appearance-comment-Woolwich-killers.html#ixzz35AlwuyQm>

¹⁰ An e-book of papers (in shorter 1,000-word versions) presented at the conference, including those on the topic of "The Power of Words and Images", can be accessed on both the British Council and CIS websites. See <http://www.cis.cam.ac.uk/conferences/post/34-acknowledging-a-shared-past-to-build-a-shared-future-rethinking-muslimnon-muslim-relations> and also the article in the Huffington Post about the conference by Sharon Memis, Director of the British Council in the US (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/sharon-memis/were-not-just-talking-abo_b_1631980.html). Partner organizations contributing to the event included the Woolf Institute, Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK), Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, University of Edinburgh, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Vodafone Foundation, and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

¹¹ Norman Cigar, "The Role of Serbian Orientalists in Justification of Genocide Against Muslims of the Balkans," in *Islamic Quarterly: Review of Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3 (1994).

¹² Tariq Ramadan, *To be a European Muslim* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999).

¹³ See the two volumes of stories compiled by Idries Shah: *The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), and *The Pleasantries of the Incredible Mulla Nasrudin* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968).

¹⁴ The distinction between procedural and ideological secularism was discussed in both phases of the Contextualizing Islam in Britain report compiled by the Center of Islamic Studies. See *Contextualizing Islam in Britain: Exploratory Perspectives*, (University of Cambridge, 2009), 28, and *Contextualizing Islam in Britain II* (University of Cambridge, 2012), 94.

¹⁵ *Narratives of Conversion to Islam in Britain: Female Perspectives*. Report by the Center of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, March 2013, 13.

¹⁶ For a more detailed examination of this issue, see *Contextualizing Islam in Britain II* (*op. cit.*), 86-90.



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal
Centre of Islamic Studies

**MUSLIMS IN THE UK AND EUROPE
SYMPOSIUM 2014**

16-18 May 2014

Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge

Venue:

The Møller Centre
Storey's Way, Cambridge CB3 0DE
Tel: +44 (0) 1223 465500
Directions: www.mollercentre.co.uk/location/index.html

Accommodation and meals: Main Building

Sessions: Study Centre 3

Programme

Friday 16 May

- 12:00 Registration & Buffet lunch (Study Centre)
- 13:45 Welcome by Professor Yasir Suleiman, Director, Centre of Islamic Studies
- 14:00 **Panel 1: Conversion** (Chair: Professor Yasir Suleiman)
- Counting the Converts: Using Data from the Scottish Census 2001 to provide a Quantitative Description of Conversion away from Islam**
Kevin Brice, University of Newcastle
- In Search of 'Pure' Islam: Conversion to Salafism Among Young Women in London**
Anabel Inge, King's College London
- Black, Female, Muslim and a Hip-Hop Artist:
A case study of Poetic Pilgrimage**
Advya Khan, LSE
- 15:30 Tea & Coffee
- 16:00 **Panel 2: Islamophobia: Muslims in the Eye of the Storm**
(Chair: Dr Paul Anderson)
- Muslim Responses to Far Right Confrontation: Ethical and Operational Considerations in Method**
Yahya Barry, University of Edinburgh
- Islamophobia on the Move: Circulation of Anti-Muslim Prejudice between Poland and the UK**
Anna Gawlewicz and Kasia Narkowicz, University of Sheffield
- The Role of Self-Esteem in Understanding Anti-Semitic and Islamophobic Prejudice**
Maryyum Mehmood King's College London
- 17:30 Break
- 17:45 **Keynote Lecture**

Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representation of Islam in the British Press

Dr Costas Gabrielatos, Senior Lecturer in English Language,
Edge Hill University

18:30 Q&A session (Chair: Professor Yasir Suleiman)

19:15 Free time

20:00 Dinner (Restaurant)

Saturday 17 May

07:30-10:00 Breakfast and Check out

09:00 **Panel 3: Ethics and Policy** (Chair: Dr Paul Anderson)

Music in the EYFS: How it can Impact Islamic Faith Early Years Settings
Maryam Bham, Cardiff University

Tayyib: British Muslim Piety and the Welfare of Animals for Food
Ruth Helen Corbet, Glasgow University

The Role of the Plurality of Fatwa (ta'addud al-fatwa) for Muslim Minorities and its Rules - An Analysis of Fatāwa of the European Council for Fatwa and Research
Ranya Hafez, University of Vienna

10:30 Tea & Coffee

11:00 **Panel 4: Islam in the Public Sphere** (Chair: Professor Yasir Suleiman)

Secularism, Reasoning and Religious Freedom in Europe
Farrah Raza, King's College London

The Use of Mediating Concepts in Ismaili Academic Discourse on Islam in the Public Sphere
Mohammad Magout, University of Leipzig

Young German Muslims and their Visibility in New Media – Emerging Counterpublics
Asmaa Soliman, UCL

12:30 Lunch (Restaurant)

14:00 **Panel 5: Country Case Studies** (Chair: Professor Maurits Berger)

Islam in Wales
Khosar Khan, Cardiff University

Patterns of State Engagement with Faith-Based Intermediary Organizations in Western Europe: The Second Image Reversed?
Gerald Thomas Fitzgerald, George Mason University

'Vienna must not become Istanbul' – The Securitization of Islam and Muslims in Austria
Zsolt Marcell Sereghy, University of Vienna

15:30 Tea & Coffee break

- 16:00 **Panel 6: Crossing Boarder** (Chair: Dr Jeremy Henzell-Thomas)
Until Death Do Us Depart: Repatriation, Burial, and the Necropolitical Work of Turkish Funeral Funds in Germany
Osman Balkan, University of Pennsylvania
- Establishment of Muslim Graveyards in Germany**
Erdogan Karakaya, Goethe University
- How Sufi Orders Have Adapted to a Western Context: Two Contrasting Examples**
Belal Abo Alabbas, University of Oxford
- 17:30 Break
- 17:45 Evening Lecture
- Being German, Becoming Muslim: Race, Religion, and Conversion in the New Europe**
Dr Esra Ozyurek, Chair for Contemporary Turkish Studies European Institute, London School of Economics
- 18:00 Q&A session (Chair: Professor Yasir Suleiman)
- 19:00 Free time
- 20:00 Dinner (Private Dining Room – Study Centre)

Sunday 18 May

- 07:30-10:00 Breakfast
- 09:00 **Panel 7: Muslim Consciousness** (Chair: Dr Paul Anderson)
Religious Travel and the Tablighi Jama'at: Expanding Horizons in Britain and Beyond
Riyaz Timol, Cardiff University
- Locating and Exploring Muslim Consciousness in the Narratives of British Muslim Women in East London**
Dr Nasima Hassan, University of East London
- 10:10 Tea & Coffee
- 10:30 **Panel 8: Muslims in the Fray** (Chair: Professor Yasir Suleiman)
Exploring the Clinical Experiences of Muslim Psychologists in the UK when Working with Religion in Therapy
Dr Sara Betteridge, University of East London
- “White feminists want to pull your hijab off and liberate you and Muslims tell you that you don’t need feminism”: Feminist Subversions of the Hijab among British Muslim Women**
Pina Sadar, Durham University
- British Muslim Communities and ‘Everyday Hate Crime’**
Julian Hargreaves, Lancaster University

12:00 **Plenary Session**

Professor Yasir Suleiman, Director, Centre of Islamic Studies
Professor Maurits Berger, Full Professor Islam in the West (Sultan of Oman
Chair for Oriental Studies), Leiden University
Dr Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, Research Associate, Centre of Islamic Studies

13:00 Buffet lunch (Restaurant)

End of Symposium