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Muslim youth in Britain: Acculturation, radicalization, and implications for social work practice/training

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ABSTRACT

Muslims comprise a significant and growing percentage of the population in the United Kingdom. Muslim youth in this country face a unique set of challenges related to cultural identity and acculturation. Because of perceived discrimination and frequent identity issues, they are often considered at risk for radicalization. This article presents theoretical frameworks for cultural identity, acculturation, and radicalization and outlines implications these concepts have for social work practice with Muslim youth in the United Kingdom. The article provides suggestions and recommendations concerning practice and training for social workers and other professions working with Muslim youth, including religious leaders and teachers.

Introduction

This article explores issues related to acculturation and radicalization among Scottish Muslim youth with a focus on second- and third-generation youth of Pakistani origin. Post-9/11 and in light of the recent surge in terror-linked activity, Muslims in the United Kingdom have become targets of antagonism based on ethno-religious and cultural differences, often referred to as Islamophobia (Abbas, 2005). These youth face a number of issues that have implications for social work practice. First, they encounter issues with cultural identity and deal with challenges related to acculturation. Second, many Muslims in Britain routinely perceive discrimination, which affects their sense of identity. Third, a major issue that has recently come to light is the radicalization of Muslim youth.

Muslim youth constitute a significant and growing percentage of the population in many Western societies and are the largest religious minority group in the United Kingdom. Nearly half of all Muslims in the United Kingdom were

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born in the country. In Great Britain and Wales in 2011, the second largest religious group after Christians (33.2 million people and 59% of the population) was Muslims (2.7 million people and 5% of the population). Muslims in the United Kingdom are ethnically diverse. Two thirds of Muslims (68%) reported an Asian background, including Pakistani (38%) and Bangladeshi (15%). The number of Muslims reporting their ethnicity as Pakistani increased from 658,000 in 2001 to over a million in 2011. While the Muslim population in Scotland represents a lower percentage of the population, the proportion is growing quickly, increasing from 0.84% (42,557) in 2001 to 1.4% (77,000) in 2011. The majority of Scotland's Muslim population is based in the west of the country and is of Pakistani Punjabi background (National Records of Scotland, 2013; UK Office for National Statistics, 2011).

Because of the issues facing Muslim youth and their growing proportion of the population, particularly those born in the United Kingdom, social work practice is an increasingly valid means of addressing issues related to acculturation, identity, and radicalization. One of the most pertinent questions regarding Islam today is the colossal misunderstanding of Islamic practice and beliefs by much of the world. Combined with issues of acculturation and identity, Muslim youth today operate within a landscape of discrimination and the ignorance of many about their culture and religion.

This article makes a number of academic and practical contributions. First, we discuss acculturation and how the identity of Muslim youth is formed through their cultural and religious affiliations and examine the role perceived discrimination plays in this process. Second, we provide an overview of the theoretical framework of radicalization and an assessment of current government strategies in the United Kingdom to prevent radicalization. Third, we discuss Islamic perspectives of social work and indicate how this can be used to inform practice with Muslim clients. Fourth, we provide suggestions and recommendations for practice and training.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework for cultural identity and acculturation, both of which are essential to understanding the issues Muslim youth face as religious and ethnic minorities in Scotland. It goes on to discuss the meaning of radicalization and the mechanisms behind it and relates it to the context of Muslim youth in Scotland. Further, the section provides a discussion on current strategies in place to prevent radicalization. Section 3 examines implications for social work practice and provides an overview of Islamic perspectives of social work. The section also provides practical suggestions and recommendations for social workers and other professionals working with Muslim youth.

Theoretical framework

Cultural identity

Identity of ethnic minority groups has been previously studied mainly in terms of ethnic identity, but religion as a key aspect of identity has recently received attention (Christmann, 2012; Robinson, 2009; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Much of the research has focused on the self-labels chosen by immigrants (Rumbaut, 1994) as there is no universally accepted definition of ethnicity used by academics and practitioners (Song, 2003).

Recently, research has suggested that ethnic minority individuals can identify with both their own ethnic group (ethnic identity) and the majority society (national identity) (Phinney & Haas, 2003). Both ethnic and national identities are assumed to change over time and context (Parekh, 2000), and across generations of immigration (Phinney & Haas, 2003). Ethnic identity and national identity can be thought of as two dimensions of group identity that vary independently; that is, each identity can be either secure and strong or undeveloped and weak (e.g., Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). It is possible to have high identification with both (Phinney & Haas, 2003). The strength of ethnic and national identities provides evidence of the extent to which ethnic minority adolescents retain a sense of belonging to their ethnic group and concurrently become a member of the larger society. This varies by group, and Robinson (2009) found that ethnic identity was stronger for Pakistani Muslim adolescents than for Indian adolescents and that national identity was more important for Indian adolescents than for Pakistani adolescents.

Many studies have focused on the role self-identity plays in attitudes of young Muslims (Field, 2011) in terms of national (being British), ethnic, and religious identity. Muslims may feel disconnected from mainstream society in the United Kingdom, and youth may be left in an ideological vacuum where they must make difficult choices with little legitimate or applicable guidance either because it has been denied them by society (Ansar, 2014) or because religious leaders and parents are not attuned to the particular difficulties of straddling mainstream culture and the ethnic and religious culture of their families and communities. During adolescence, issues raised by immigration, specifically those concerning identity, are particularly salient (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Birman (1998) suggested that this is because ethnic, religious, and national identities often call for conflicting value and behavioral prescriptions. Adolescents' identities are not yet stable and are open to exploration and interpretation, which means this age group may be more prone to conflict over their identity (Berry et al., 2006). Erikson (1968) proposed a process whereby adolescents begin with an unclear sense of their identity, experience a "crisis," and eventually achieve a clear sense of their identity. He stated that "identity crisis" was normative to adolescence

and young adulthood. Scholars no longer refer to this process as a crisis and prefer to use "exploration" to describe the typical adolescent's approach to identity formation. However, for some adolescents, identity development is traumatic and disturbing (Berk, 1999).

The identity of many second- and third-generation Muslim youth in the United Kingdom is created from the intersection of cultural, religious, and social factors. Hussain and Bagguley (2005) found differences in identity in terms of how individuals view their citizenship between first-generation migrants and those born in the United Kingdom (second generation). First-generation immigrants often view themselves as temporary economic migrants while many second-generation immigrants have adopted a hybrid identity comprising a Scottish/Western national identity, the ethnic identity of their parents, and their religious identity. For second-generation and beyond immigrants, social identity is defined through inclusion in some social categories and exclusion from others (Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, 2011). Second-generation Muslim youth must negotiate and consolidate the values and behaviors prescribed by their ethnic group with those prescribed by the dominant culture (Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002). This is especially challenging when the values and beliefs of the nondominant culture differ significantly from those of the dominant culture.

Scholars have explored the importance of religion in Muslim identity in numerous studies (Hutnik, 1985; Jacobson, 1997; Knott & Khokher, 1993; Modood, 2003, 2005; Robinson, 2009; Saeed, Blain, & Forbes, 1999). A key theme that emerges from the literature is the extent to which Muslims born in the United Kingdom are increasingly identifying with their religion (Christmann, 2012; Robinson, 2009). One study examining the importance of religion in identity for South Asian Muslims in the United Kingdom found that 80% of respondents to a survey listed religion as an important aspect of their identity (Hutnik, 1985). In another study, second- and third-generation Pakistani Muslims in Glasgow aged between 14 and 17 identified Muslim and Pakistani as the top-two self-identification categories in a survey. Notably, participants chose Muslim nearly three times as often (85%) as Pakistani (30%) (Saeed et al., 1999).

The aftermath of 9/11, the ensuing war in Iraq, and the emergence of the so-called Islamic State have shifted the focus to religious identity and necessitated a closer examination of how ethnicity and religion intersect to form identity. Most immigrants and ethnic minority group members struggle with the question of combining subgroup identities with commitments to their country of residence (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). In times of uncertainty, members of minority groups may turn inwards and identify more strongly with their religious or ethnic classification (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moytt, 2012) than their national identity. The perception of discrimination and a sense of powerlessness may strengthen an individual's

ethnic identification and weaken ties to the national group (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). Because religion offers a systematic way of viewing the world and, in the case of Islam, a clear set of guidelines for how followers should live their lives, people may strongly identify with religion when faced with difficulty and solidify their identity in this way.

Nadir and Dziegielewski's (2001) five broad categories indicate the continuum of religious identity for Muslims living in Western societies. These categories are:

• Traditional–strongly practicing: Religious and cultural affairs are considered a single entity. Members of this group base their decisions on religious beliefs.

• Bicultural–moderately practicing: Members participate in religious and mainstream communities. Their perspective and decisions are based on secular and religious principles with more weight given to religion.

• Acculturated–nonpracticing: Members engage in few Islamic practices and rarely participate in religious activities. They base most decisions on values of the dominant mainstream culture.

• Assimilated–nonpracticing: Members were raised as a Muslim or their families are Muslim, but they do not practice this religion. They have largely assimilated into the dominant mainstream culture and their perspective is primarily secular.

• Recommitted–strongly practicing: This group is similar to the traditional group, but members have reclaimed their identity as Muslim after time spent as acculturated or assimilated.

From this continuum, it is apparent that religious identity is not static and is highly indicative of cultural identity. Therefore, the category along the continuum in which an individual is located may be indicative of religious identity and should be an important consideration in social work practice. This consideration can be used to enable a more specific understanding of an individual's beliefs and practices and tailor plans accordingly.

Acculturation

Psychologists use the construct of acculturation to describe within-group cultural differences. Acculturation has been defined "in terms of the integration of new cultural patterns into the original cultural patterns" (Paniagua, 2014, p. 8) and describes the way beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are modified because of exposure to other cultures (Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, 2011). One assumption acculturation researchers make is the existence of cultural differences in the different groups and individuals in contact with each other. However, it is important to note that "cultures are not static, especially in a community where there are people from different

cultures living side by side" (Fernando, 2010, p. 5). Culture should be considered fluid.

Acculturation theory is concerned with the extent to which ethnic identity is maintained when an ethnic group is in continuous contact with the dominant group (Phinney, 1990). While acculturation is a neutral term in principle (i.e., change may take place in either or both groups), in practice, it tends to induce more change in nondominant, immigrant groups.

Acculturation can take place at the macro/group level and the micro/individual level. This means that an individual from a minority group can experience acculturation differently than others in their group (Berry, 1997). Macrolevel acculturation occurs when the original culture of a minority group undergoes a change in cultural practices due to ongoing physical contact with a different culture (Berry, 1997). Microlevel acculturation is known as psychological acculturation, which refers to a psychological change that an individual experiences due to the acculturation process (Berry, 1997, 2008). At the individual level, consideration is given to the psychological changes that individuals undergo and their eventual adaptation to a new situation. Adaptations can be psychological (e.g., emotional well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction) or sociocultural (e.g., competence in social skills and interactions; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Within immigrant groups, there are vast differences in how individuals deal with acculturative change (Berry, 1997). These strategies (termed acculturation strategies) have three aspects: preferences ("acculturation attitudes"; see Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989); how much change an individual actually undergoes ("behavioral shifts"; see Berry, 1980); and the extent to which these changes are problematic (the phenomenon of "acculturative stress"; see Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

Berry (1989) suggested that the acculturation strategies of ethnic minority groups can be described in terms of two independent dimensions: (a) retention of an individual's cultural traditions and (b) establishment and maintenance of relationships with the dominant society. When these two central dimensions are considered simultaneously, a conceptual framework of four acculturation strategies emerges, namely assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Berry, 1989). When individuals do not maintain their ethnic identity and cultural traditions and seek daily interaction with other cultures, this describes *assimilation*. In contrast, when individuals who identify with the nondominant culture retain their original culture and avoid interaction with the dominant culture, this describes *separation*. When this mode of acculturation is pursued by the dominant group with respect to the nondominant group, the term segregation applies. When individuals maintain their original culture and interact daily with other groups, this describes *integration*. With integration, some degree of cultural integrity in terms of ethnic or religious identity is maintained while individuals also participate as

an integral part of the broader social network of the community or country in which they live. Finally, when individuals have little interest in maintaining their original culture and little interest in relations with the larger social network, this describes *marginalization*. Acculturation research has been concerned with identifying acculturation strategies and examining how these relate to psychological adaptation. Individuals adopting an integration strategy show better psychological adaptation than those favoring the other acculturation strategies described here (Berry, 1989).

Orientation toward acculturation has been assessed using various methods (reviewed by Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 1987). While there is usually an overall coherent preference for one particular acculturation strategy among individuals (see Berry et al., 1989), preferences for one acculturation strategy over others may vary depending on the context because acculturation is situational (Ruiz, 1990). More cultural maintenance may be sought in the home, the extended family, and an individual's own community than in public spheres such as the workplace, and there may be less intergroup contact sought in private spheres than in public spheres.

We cannot assume that individuals have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate. The attitudes of the host society play a powerful role in influencing the way acculturation takes place (Berry, 1974). The host society can enforce certain forms of acculturation or constrain the options available to minority individuals (Berry, 1974). For example, integration can only be chosen by minority individuals, when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation toward cultural diversity (Berry, 1984). The acceptance of cultural diversity and integration by the broader society involves an attitude of mutual accommodation, now widely called multiculturalism (Berry, 1984). When assimilation is preferred or sought by the dominant group, this is often referred to as a melting pot situation. However, as stated previously, when the dominant group enforces separation, this refers to segregation.

The marginalization experience is more common among minority groups living in exclusionist countries that do not allow minority groups equality and full rights (Berry, 1997). People rarely choose the marginalization strategy; "rather they usually become marginalised as a result of attempts at forced assimilation combined with forced exclusion (Segregation)" (Berry, 1997, p. 10).

Even when a country accepts pluralism, there are differences in the relative acceptance of specific cultural, racial, and religious groups (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995). For example, people whose physical features differ from those of the host society (e.g., Pakistani Muslims in Scotland) may experience prejudice and discrimination and may thus be reluctant to pursue assimilation to avoid social rejection (Berry et al., 1989). Less discrimination is usually reported by individuals opting for integration and assimilation

while more is experienced by those opting for separation or marginalization (Berry et al., 1989; Robinson, 2012).

Adolescents vary in the extent to which they find acculturation problematic and in the ways they deal with it (Matute-Bianchi, 1986). Some seem to resolve the conflicts between ethnic and mainstream culture and achieve a bicultural identity. Others choose to identify solely with their ethnic culture and remain separated from the wider society. Robinson (2012) compared the acculturation strategies and perceived discrimination of second-generation Indian (Gujarati Hindu) and Pakistani (Muslim) adolescents living in Scotland. Indian adolescents showed the strongest preference for the integration strategy. However, for Pakistani adolescents, separation was the preferred strategy. Indian adolescents generally felt they were not at all or only rarely discriminated against while their Pakistani peers perceived more discrimination (Robinson, 2012). Perceived discrimination was related to adolescents' acculturation strategies. The direct association between perceived discrimination and minority group identification has been demonstrated in various studies (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002).

The racist antagonism Muslims in Britain experience due to ethnoreligious and cultural difference (Parekh, 2000) may be one of the factors that influence the acculturation strategies utilized by Muslim Pakistanis. The racial disadvantage and poverty documented among Muslim communities in the United Kingdom may be associated with adolescents distancing themselves from the larger society and feeling that they do not belong. Muslim communities in the United Kingdom are among the most disadvantaged groups (as measured by income, housing, occupation, and education) of South Asians (Modood et al., 1998). Muslims in both Scotland and Great Britain often experience religious and racial discrimination, supporting arguments of a double burden (Hopkins, 2007). When individuals experience discrimination, they are likely to reject close involvement with the host society and be more oriented to their own ethnic group (Berry et al., 2006). In addition to limiting opportunities and indoctrinating minorities with a sense of low self-value, perceived discrimination is a factor in radicalization frameworks (discussed in Section 2.3).

Radicalization

Theoretical frameworks of radicalization

Radicalization has been defined in many ways, but the term is generally used to describe a phenomenon that leads to home-grown terrorism or terrorist acts perpetrated by those who live in the country they wish to attack (King & Taylor, 2011). However, the term can also be used in a broader context to refer to adherence to extremist ideology that may in the future lead to the previously described behavior. Radicalization is an important issue,

particularly in the backdrop of the current political context. Because it is a systemic issue, it is crucial for social workers and other front-line personnel who interact with Muslim youth to address the issue in practice (King & Taylor, 2011).

Many frameworks have been used to describe radicalization. There is no overarching definition on which practitioners and academics agree, but a common thread is that radicalization is a progressive continuum and that there are "multiple and diverse pathways leading individuals and groups to radicalization and terrorism" (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008, p. 429). Scholars have defined radicalization as a process that moves along a continuum from preradicalization through stages of self-identification, indoctrination, and finally, jihadization (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). Similarly, Borum (2003) described a pathway that allows the development of justification of terrorism. Moghaddam's (2005) terrorism "staircase" includes six stages or "floors" where specific factors influence individuals (whose numbers decrease as the floors get higher) to move toward radicalization. Models of radicalization developed by law enforcement authorities have tiered (Audit Commission, 2008) and linear (Silber & Bhatt, 2007) forms and also rely on a continuum framework. Wiktorowicz (2005) outlined a linear course of radicalization based on a case study of the Islamist al-Muhajiroun movement in the United Kingdom. His trajectory includes four linear processes, namely, cognitive opening, religious seeking, frame alignment, and socialization. Cognitive opening can be correlated with a preradicalization stage in which an individual makes the first of many decisions leading to radicalization (King & Taylor, 2011). The process of cognitive opening is often the result of personal crisis due to an issue such as discrimination or the end results of discrimination such as job loss or social stigma. Discussion with a radicalized religious leader or extremist group member is also included in the cognitive opening process. McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) identified 12 mechanisms of radicalization that function on three levels: individual, group, and mass. Some of these mechanisms, particularly those on the individual level (i.e., personal victimization and political grievance) intersect with Wiktorowicz's (2005) processes.

Several scholars have attempted to identify potential risk factors for radicalization. A systematic review of the literature on radicalization found that Islamic radicalization and terrorism originate from a heterogeneous population with striking variations in terms of education, family background, socioeconomic status, and income (Christmann, 2012). However, some studies have identified psychological, political, sociocultural, and religious factors that may lead to the acceptance of extremist ideology and radicalization (Wiktorowicz, 2005). However, these factors cannot be considered universal as they are not present in every case. They have been referred to as "radicalizing agents" (Briggs & Birdwell, 2009) in contrast to factors that are present

in all similar cases. The lack of a set of individual-level factors or character-istics commonly found in individuals that have been radicalized indicates that the process itself is highly variable.

A consistent finding in the radicalization literature is that involvement in violent radicalization is a group phenomenon and that social bonds and group dynamics play important roles in the radicalization process. McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) proposed mechanisms that function at the group level, and Wiktorowicz (2004) discussed the use of mobilizing agents that appeal to a "sentiment pool" sharing common grievances.

Government strategies for preventing radicalization

While a great deal of academic work on radicalization has been focused on individuals, the UK government's programs to address radicalization focus on the group dynamics (Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, 2010), which presents an imperative aspect for social work to address. The government's counter-terrorism strategy is called CONTEST and comprises four aspects: Prevent, Pursue, Protect, and Prepare. The Prevent Strategy is the UK government's reaction to and tactics to prevent violent radicalization and is based on the conceptualization of radicalization as "a social process particularly prevalent in small groups" (Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, 2010). As its name suggests, efforts aimed at the prevention of radicalization form the core of the Prevent strategy. A focus is on extremism, which is defined as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs" (Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, 2010).

Although the Prevent strategy is focused on group dynamics of extre-mism and radicalization, the Channel program, which is also part of CONTEST, is directed toward the identification of individuals vulnerable to radicalization. The Channel policy involves a multiagency approach that relies on the cooperation of social workers, youth workers, teachers, and health workers to support the police in detecting at-risk individuals. After an individual is identified, a panel comprising members of government, social workers, teachers, and other relevant positions assesses the situation and decides whether to refer them for further treatment (UK Government, 2015).

In theory, CONTEST is directed at tackling all forms radicalization and extremism, as of 2011, but over 90% of those identified as being on the pathway to extremism were Muslim (Kundnani, 2011; UK Government, 2010). The Muslim Council of Britain has expressed reservations over the implementation of the Prevent strategy and has documented instances of what they call its unfair application to Muslim youth (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015). Young people from minority ethnic communities have been

particularly affected by related stop and search practices by the police (Medina Ariza, 2013).

The government has come under intense scrutiny for what some call a failure to implement policies guided by a comprehensive understanding of radicalization (Ansar, 2014). Many have argued that this approach criminalizes vulnerable populations (O'Toole, Meer, DeHanas, Jones, & Modood, 2016). Some researchers have made the argument that this strategy, by treating all Muslims as if they are at risk of becoming radicalized, creates "suspect" communities, which hinders multicultural integration (Awan, 2012; Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011; Githens-Mazer, 2011; Hickman, Thomas, Silvestri, & Nickels, 2011) and fosters social divisions (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011; Kundnani, 2015). Mythen, Walklate, and Khan (2009, p. 750) argued that these practices, along with other counter-terrorism measures, create a climate of suspicion and paranoia that itself may contribute to mental health issues or vulnerability to radicalization and drive a need on the part of young Muslims to "manage, express, and conceal" what they consider "risky identities." Further, Spalek and colleagues (2010) stated that using the "shared values" of Muslims as a criterion for determining who is at risk of radicalization is a dangerous rhetoric and may eventually serve to alienate Muslims.

Implications for social work practice and training

The theoretical framework outlined in the previous section is key to informing social work practice and training with Muslim youth. Addressing the issues of cultural identity, acculturation, and radicalization is an important objective for social work practice with Muslim youth in Great Britain and Scotland. The following sections present an overview of the Islamic perspective of social work and discuss practice and training informed by this perspective as well as the theoretical frameworks outlined in this article.

A primary concern within practice and training is forging effective multidisciplinary partnerships and involving not only social work practitioners but also religious leaders, teachers, and other professionals that have frequent contact with Muslim youth. The focus in Scotland has been on achieving better outcomes through partnerships and redesigning and developing integrated clinical and care pathways that consider both health and social care (Gardee & Singh, 2006). The following includes suggestions for social work practitioners and considers the roles of other individuals with relationships with Muslim youth.

A concern when dealing with immigrant groups of Muslims is willingness to seek help from mainstream providers, including social workers. This is tied into how social services are viewed regarding beliefs about family and community. There is hesitance in some ethnic minority communities to seek

out or accept social care because of the stigma attached to this in their native culture (al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000a; Ciftci, Jones, & Corrigan, 2012; Graham, Bradshaw, & Trew, 2009b; Owuor & Nake, 2015). While the focus of this article is on second- and third-generation Muslim youth, who may be separated from these beliefs due to acculturation, this remains a concern to some degree. Immigrants often adhere to a group mentality but receive little support from the community in which they live. It is thus imperative to consider not only the Islamic perspective of social work but also family and community dynamics to ensure acceptance of interventions and guidance.

Of practical importance for social workers is the question of how ethnic and national (majority) identities and the resulting identity categories are related to the adaptation of minorities and immigrants. Integration, that is, simultaneous ethnic retention and adaptation to a new society, is the most adaptive mode of acculturation. It is the most conducive to immigrant and minority adolescents' well-being whereas marginalization is the least advantageous to their well-being (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 1987; Berry & Sam, 1997). The International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth (Berry et al., 2006) and work from other researchers (Berry & Sam, 1997; Robinson, 2003) support the view that a bicultural or integrated identity is generally associated with higher levels of overall well-being than other identity categories (e.g., assimilation). In Great Britain, Robinson (2003) found that the integration strategy related positively and significantly with life satisfaction for Indian, Pakistani, and African Caribbean adolescents. Because of the importance of ethnic identity as a self-label that minorities or immigrants use when forming their cultural identity (Phinney, 1990), pressure to assimilate and relinquish a sense of ethnicity may result in anger, depression, and, in some cases, violence.

Accordingly, social workers should avoid reflecting the cultural biases and stereotypes found in society and demonstrate respect for cultural diversity in their provision of services (Hodge, 2005). Social work is committed to antidiscriminatory and antioppressive practice (see Thompson, 2016), and cultural sensitivity is an important consideration for social workers working with Muslim youth.

Islamic perspective of social work

Many authors have called into question whether existing social work practices are adequate to address the needs of Muslims (Barise, 2005; Crabtree, 2008; Graham, Bradshaw, & Trew, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Hall, 2007). It has been previously recognized in social work that basic knowledge of Islam assists in better identifying appropriate forms of intervention (Crabtree, 2008). Muslim communities in the United Kingdom are faced with issues that include discrimination, poverty, and problems stemming from

difficulties with acculturation (Hopkins, 2007; Parekh, 2000). Addressing such problems in the face of negative narratives about Muslims and their communities, a general lack of knowledge of Islam, and increasing discrimination presents a challenge for social work. The perspective provided here is an overview and some aspects are relevant for social workers working with Muslim youth.

Islam offers a comprehensive view of the world (Barise & France, 2004), which is based on *tawhid* (Islamic monotheism). *Tawhid* is grounded in understanding the differences between revealed (Quranic) and acquired knowledge (*shariah*/ traditions of the Prophet Mohamed). The two are integrated into a unified knowledge known as *ilm*. Accordingly, spirituality is an encompassing concept for many Muslims (depending on where they fall along Nadir and Dziegielewski's [2001] continuum). Islam acts as a meta-narrative, affecting multiple aspects of life (Graham et al., 2009a) and it is essential to consider this in social work practice. Accordingly, psychosocial assessment should include spiritual (religious) assessment (Crabtree, 2008) so social workers can create holistic profiles of their clients, especially those who are under stress or dealing with a personal crisis.

It is also important to consider that Islamic teachings balance the individual to the group in terms of responsibility, accountability, and meeting of needs. According to Islamic precepts, the viability of any Muslim community depends on mutual interdependence between its different members (Barise, 2005). Islam emphasizes the responsibilities of both the collective and the individual (Crabtree, 2008) and views individual well-being as complementary to social welfare.

Muslims in the United Kingdom are a highly diverse group with numerous ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, familial, tribal, regional, socioeconomic, and national identities (al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000a). While care should be taken not to treat all Muslims under the umbrella of their religion, there are certain tenets that run across the cultural groups that comprise the community of the faithful, or *ummah*. The overarching pillars of faith form the basis of religious beliefs and are held in common across geographic areas and ethnic groups (Crabtree, 2008). These pillars are *shahadah* (stating faith), *salat* (praying), *zakat* (charity to support the needy), *sawm* (fasting during Ramadan), and *hajj* (pilgrimage).

Awareness of the Islamic perspective of social justice is particularly useful in social work practice. In Islam, the welfare of a society is covered under *zakat*, which is the practice of collecting payments that are used for charitable purposes to help community members in need. Islamic *zakat* differs from the Christian view of charity in that the former is intended to serve specifically the cause of social justice. From the Christian perspective, providing for the needy is not viewed as an inscribed duty but is instead a way for believers to express the grace of God in a material way. The Islamic perspective differs in that the needy are entitled under religious doctrine to claim assistance. This alms-giving redistributes wealth and contributes to the well-being of individuals as the health of society (Crabtree, 2008).

Issues that are important to address in social work with Muslim youth include discrimination (Hopkins, 2007) and socioeconomic conditions (Modood et al., 1998), which are related to the concept of social justice In addition, issues related to women are also central because social work is often focused on the family unit and female caregivers. Among these issues are enforced or traditional marriage (Crabtree, 2008), which affects some young Muslim women, childrearing and the view of families toward children, the role of women as caregivers for the young, elderly, and disabled, and domestic violence. A notable concern is some forms of domestic violence in Muslim communities that are due to the perception that the victim's behavior has harmed her family's honor, or *izzat*. This can be an issue involving young Muslim women and their families although this is far from the norm in Western countries. For more details about these issues, please see Al-Krenawi (2016) and Crabtree (2008).

Numerous texts (see e.g., Barise, 2005) are available that provide an introduction to Islam so practitioners can have a basic understanding of the religious beliefs of their clients. This knowledge can serve to dispel some of the incorrect and damaging narrative surrounding Islamic religious beliefs and practices due to current political events and allow social workers to provide better informed treatment for Muslim clients.

Suggestions and recommendations for training and practice

As outlined in the previous section, it is important for social workers and other professionals such as teachers and health personnel to have a non-biased understanding of Islamic teachings as well as cultural and religious traditions, particularly how these affect daily life and individual perspectives, to appropriately meet the needs of Muslim clients. Currently, the majority of the population of the United Kingdom is unfamiliar with the traditions and teachings of Islam, and most people gain the knowledge they have from media reporting, which is often inaccurate and sensationalized (Poole & Richardson, 2006; Runnymede Trust, 1997). Generalizations about Muslim ethnic groups could lead to stereotyping if social work professionals do not adequately understand cultural traditions and religious perspectives. Consequently, there is a need for imams, Islamic scholars, and community workers to work in an integrated way with social workers to help them assist their clients in an effective way.

Social workers should liaise and develop joint educational programs with community organizations, including community representatives and imams, to support multiculturalism. This will enable both professionals and Muslim youth to better understand how religious beliefs affect and influence their interactions with others. In schools where teachers come from different cultures than their students and religion receives minimal

attention in the curriculum, there may be a lack of understanding about the integral nature of religion in Muslims' self-identity. Social workers should work closely with their colleagues in public service or nongovernmental organizations to ensure they have some knowledge of the religious groups present in their community, their basic beliefs, and how these inform perspectives on daily life. There should also be continuous consultation and discussion with Islamic scholars and imams to regularly assess efficacy of educational and collaborative efforts and to work toward a best-practice model that can be a blueprint for future efforts. This can be essential in determining appropriate interventions, providing appropriate guidance, and ensuring that assistance is readily accepted (Crabtree & Baba, 2001).

If religious leaders are left out of the social work process, social workers miss the opportunity to reach a significant part of the Muslim community. Because of the tradition in Islam to seek guidance from religious leaders and the absence of a strong social support network outside the family in many Muslim majority countries, imams and other leaders play an important role in the lives of Muslims (Barise & France, 2004). Accordingly, these individuals may be more likely to consult an imam for social and mental health issues because they wish to avoid diagnosis by mental health professionals (Ciftci et al., 2012). This emphasizes the importance of involving imams and the necessity of social workers to be aware of and understand clients' religious beliefs. Among social work professionals working with Muslim youth, this is central to ensuring competence about their clients' spirituality and effectively counselling clients.

Al-Krenawi (2016) examined the role of the mosque in the community and found that it can help bridge the gap between local-religious and Western models of intervention. In addition to being a place for prayer, the mosque provides education and conflict resolution. There is a unique opportunity for collaboration between imams and social workers in which they can help social workers with interventions involving Muslim clients by helping them understand Islamic concepts, beliefs, and religious practices, particularly as they apply in times of crisis (Gilbert, 2000; Hall, 2007; Siddiqui, 2004). Training for imams can increase and consolidate knowledge regarding social work practices and counseling, which is important since many young Muslims turn to imams in help dealing with mental health issues (Ali, Milstein, & Marzuk, 2005). Imams should receive training on counseling youth, with an emphasis on dealing with radicalization. This training should include both theoretical and practical applications and can be supported with case studies.

However, imams in the United Kingdom have varying degrees of education and, because they are often appointed from other countries, may be largely ignorant of Western culture (Al-Krenawi, 2016). Recent

empirical evidence from assessment of Scottish Muslim youth revealed that views of older imams were generally negative and reflected a clear lack of open communication between youth and older religious leaders (Robinson & Gardee, 2016). Accordingly, it is important to include imams within the framework of social work practice to ensure they are adequately engaging with youth and understand the concepts underlying social work practice.

A key area in which it is important for imams to engage with youth is the preradicalization phase. Previous work has suggested that preventive measures should be implemented to address the preradicalization phase, which is the stage when individuals begin to develop sympathies for extremist ideas or terrorist movements without becoming directly involved (Bhui et al., 2014). Training on measures to address this can be directed toward parents, who can learn how to recognize changes in their children that may signal a move toward radicalization, and imams, who can be more effective advisors if they more clearly understand the issues that Muslim youth face in terms of acculturation, discrimination, and previously described hybrid cultural identities. There is a need for social workers and community workers to liaise closely with nongovernmental and other organizations to provide related courses for parents and religious leaders.

In the United Kingdom, organizations dealing with potential extremism are actively organizing seminars and specialized courses on community development, community empowerment/participation, leadership roles for imams, community activists, and parents through formally recognized agencies that include imamsonline.com, Faith Associates (empowering communities), Building Mosque Leaders, the National Association of Madrassah, and the Muslim Councils of Britain and Scotland. Involved organizations have indicated that the courses have been well received by the religious scholars, imams, and the community at large, but imams' overall willingness to receive such training is an issue that deserves more attention in future research. Several well-documented programs aimed at preventing extremism and radicalization are currently being delivered by trained professionals. The Islamic Social Services Association's (Canada) United Against Terrorism is a collaborative effort to address radicalization in an inclusive and socially just way (Islamic Social Services Association, National Council of Canadian Muslims, & Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014). Additionally, the TerRa Toolkit funded by the European Union, is a comprehensive prevention and learning program for local and national governments and people in contact with vulnerable individuals potentially at risk of radicalization (Young et al., 2014).

Narratives, particularly in online materials and communications, are commonly used by extremist groups for recruitment and radicalization (De Koster & Houtman, 2008; Lee & Leets, 2002; Young, Rooze, & Holsappel,

2015). Equipping social workers with sufficient knowledge of Islam is helpful as it allows them to question young people who often have little personal knowledge but may begin to buy into narratives of extremists. It is also important to emphasize the need to effectively analyze narratives for accuracy and bias and teach students skills to do so as well as ensure practitioners have enough information to discuss a counter-narrative. Leadership programs for young people as well as surveys and critical analysis of subjects that may be encountered in these narratives are opportunities to effectively address this topic within the context of social work. Numerous agencies have addressed this topic with programs targeted at counter-narrative campaigns and developing effective counter-narratives for target audiences with the aim of preventing the spread of radicalization (Heath-Kelly, 2013; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2016; Institute for Strategic Dialogue & RAN Centre of Excellence, 2015; International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2014; Russell & Rafiq, 2016).

Prevention education involving imams is a largely untapped area that could be an important step in addressing narratives used by terrorist and radicalized organizations for recruitment. Youth exposed to extremism (online or elsewhere) rarely go to the imams in the community. For each theological argument an imam makes, extremist recruiters provide youth with a counter argument (Siddiqui, personal communication, December 2016). Consequently, imams should receive training on the political context in which they operate, the universal values and normative assumptions that govern the respective society, and the judicial-legal framework in which they operate to enable them to effectively communicate with young Muslims.

On a related note, engaging with youth in arenas that are considered high risk in terms of vulnerability of individuals and increased opportunity to prey on these vulnerabilities is a newly emerging concern. Recent studies have presented empirical evidence regarding online radicalization and the use of the Internet for terrorism-related activities (Gill, Corner, Thornton, & Conway, 2015; Von Behr, Reding, Edwards, & Gribbon, 2013). Because social media participation levels among youth are high and will continue to rise, consideration of online activity is an important consideration for social work. In addition to the existing strategies put in place in by government agencies (Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, 2010), recent studies have made practice-based suggestions for interventions that consider or are based around online activity that may result in radicalization (see, e.g., Conway, 2016).

Furthermore, social factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, family background, and religion are powerful factors in the preradicalization phase (Bhui, Hicks, Lashley, & Jones, 2012). Addressing social factors is the core of social work practice so these factors are already the targets of considerable attention in any social work context. However, because social factors can play a role in the radicalization continuum (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Silber &

Bhatt, 2007), special consideration should be given to these factors when dealing with Muslim youth. In addition to the radicalization frameworks outlined in this article (see Section 2.3.2), Bhui and colleagues (2012) discussed how discrimination can contribute to radicalization through social isolation. Also discussed in an earlier section, perceived discrimination can influence acculturation strategies. This indicates the need for consideration of discrimination in future work on preventing violent radicalization.

The suggestions outlined in this section are an excellent starting point to more effectively addressing the acculturation and cultural identity of Muslim youth in Scotland and the process of radicalization. The findings of this article can be extended to other Western countries as many issues facing other ethnic minority groups are similar to those discussed here. Because of the increasing issues resulting from radicalization, this timely article is also a stepping stone to research on this and related topics.

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