

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

MUSLIM YOUNG ADULTS IN BERLIN, COPENHAGEN AND MONTREAL: A
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THEIR RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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PRESENTED
IN PARTIAL COMPLETION OF THE
DOCTORATE IN PSYCHOLOGY

BY
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UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

JEUNES ADULTES MUSULMANS À BERLIN, COPENHAGUE ET
MONTRÉAL : UNE ANALYSE QUALITATIVE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DE
LEURS IDENTITÉS RELIGIEUSES ET NATIONALES

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I thank God for all the blessings bestowed upon me, and for the countless opportunities to engage this world intellectually in good health, security, and surrounded by men and women of wisdom and courage. I seek refuge in the light of His countenance from arrogance and pride, for which all this work would amount to nothing. As it is said in the Prophetic traditions, "He who does not thank the people, does not thank God." It is impossible to tally everyone who contributed to my personal and professional development over the course of this PhD, paving my path and easing my struggles, without dedicating an auto-biography solely to this endeavour. I will mention a few names nonetheless, and I pray those I inadvertently neglect forgive my shortcomings.

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Puisque le doctorant a effectué ses études primaires, secondaires et post-secondaires en anglais, le Sous-comité d'admission et d'évaluation des programmes d'études des cycles supérieurs du département de psychologie lui a accordée l'autorisation de rédiger la présente thèse en anglais.

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RÉSUMÉ

Les musulmans occidentaux font souvent l'objet d'une attention négative de la part des médias depuis les attentats du 11 septembre 2001. Par conséquent, la communauté musulmane se sent progressivement marginalisée du reste de la société. La compatibilité entre l'islam et les contextes laïques est l'un des thèmes centraux qui surgissent dans le discours politique des pays occidentaux. Le sujet de l'identité joue un rôle important en illustrant les défis potentiels que les musulmans occidentaux confrontent tout en négociant leurs affiliations religieuses et nationales. L'objectif principal de cette thèse est d'explorer et de comparer le développement des identités religieuses et nationales des jeunes adultes musulmans, nés et élevés dans des sociétés occidentales, en particulier les villes de Montréal, Berlin et Copenhague, là où ils sont la cible des discours politiques controversés.

Notre recherche a utilisé une analyse narrative qualitative pour explorer les expériences des jeunes adultes musulmans occidentaux. Une approche contextualisée au carrefour interdisciplinaire de l'approche de l'identité sociale et l'interactionnisme symbolique a établi les fondements théoriques de notre analyse. Cette méthode apprécie la façon dont les individus font sens de leurs expériences, ainsi que la façon dont les contextes sociaux établissent les limites auxquelles ces significations peuvent être faites, c'est-à-dire dans la formation de leurs identifications groupales. Nous avons recruté trente participants — quinze hommes et quinze femmes — âgés entre 18 et 25 ans. Dix participants provenaient chacune des villes Montréal, Berlin et Copenhague. Parmi ce groupe nous comptions dix participants convertis à l'islam. Les participants ont été recrutés par le bouche-à-oreille parmi des groupes de jeunesse, ainsi que parmi des associations étudiantes, des écoles secondaires, des collèges, des universités et des mosquées sunnites. Un guide d'entrevue qualitative a été développé et validé par le comité de supervision de l'éthique, composé de questions ouvertes utilisées dans un format semi-structuré.

Le premier article explore et compare le développement des identités religieuses et nationales selon le paysage politique dans lequel elles s'insèrent. Il aborde la question de recherche suivante : comment le développement des identités religieuse et nationale des jeunes adultes musulmans diffèrent selon le contexte politique? Cet article identifie deux thèmes fondamentaux liés à l'identité nationale : la citoyenneté et l'engagement civique. L'expression de ces thèmes diffère selon les caractéristiques

sociopolitiques de chaque pays. Au Canada, les participants décrivent leur citoyenneté comme un élément intégral à leur identité nationale, alors que l'engagement civique représente plutôt une obligation personnelle et religieuse. En Allemagne et au Danemark, la citoyenneté reflète une ambivalence à propos de leur identité nationale, découlant d'une relation incertaine avec l'État. L'engagement civique est présenté alors comme un moyen de défendre l'islam dans l'arène publique. Nous discutons de l'importance de contextualiser les expressions de l'identité nationale selon les conditions sociopolitiques prévalentes.

L'article deux explore le processus par lequel les jeunes adultes musulmans développent leur identité religieuse, c'est-à-dire d'un héritage parental vers un choix personnel. Il aborde la question de recherche suivante : comment les jeunes musulmans développent-ils leurs identités nationales et religieuses à la lumière de l'augmentation de l'islamophobie? Cet article examine comment certains participants ont développé une attitude anti-ethnique significative, liée à leur identité musulmane, envers l'identité religieuse de leurs parents. Ils développent par la suite leur identité religieuse selon l'environnement de leurs pairs. Derrière ce processus se trouve un besoin essentiel de développer une identité musulmane 'objective'. Nous extrapolons comment certains jeunes musulmans occidentaux ont besoin d'une identité musulmane objective pour lutter contre l'augmentation de l'islamophobie dans le discours socio-politique, et pour établir un sentiment de certitude à la lumière des divisions ethniques intra-religieuses.

L'article trois explore les changements qui se produisent dans la configuration des identités sociales des convertis musulmans avant et après l'acceptation de la foi islamique. Il aborde les questions de recherche suivante : comment est ce que le contexte politique influe t-il sur le développement de l'identité sociale des musulmans convertis ? Il explore les récits des musulmans convertis qui ont vécus des conflits entre leurs identités nationales et ethniques avant la conversion. Les participants révèlent comment ils ont révisé leur configuration de l'identité sociale pendant la conversion, en inversant leur relation antagoniste à leur identité nationale. Leurs récits racontent comment les réalités politiques submergent la perception et le développement de l'identité musulmane occidentale. Ceci nécessite, pour les convertis, une réévaluation de leur identité nationale comme étant une forme de critique sociale envers l'État. Nos résultats démontrent comment les éléments de discrimination et de la race sont tous significativement impliqués dans le processus de conversion et le développement de l'identité musulmane.

L'article quatre explore les récits des musulmans occidentaux, en enquêtant sur la façon dont ils comprennent la relation entre leurs identités religieuse et nationale, en fonction de leurs expériences personnelles. Il aborde la question de recherche suivante : comment est ce que les jeunes musulmans négocient-ils leurs multiples identités sociales à la lumière de leurs trajectoires de vie uniques? En adoptant une position constructiviste envers les fondements de deux modèles d'identités, soit celles de l'acculturation et de l'identité biculture, cet article met l'accent sur deux thèmes qui soulignent le développement de l'identité : la primauté de l'expérience et l'enchevêtrement des identités sociales multiples.

L'article cinq propose une nouvelle approche pour comprendre la relation entre l'identité religieuse et nationale des jeunes musulmans, dans une tentative de surmonter la réification politique des identités sociales. Il aborde la question de recherche suivante : comment peut-on comprendre les identités multiples d'un jeune adulte musulman occidental en dehors des cadres des modèles d'identité biculturel et d'acculturation? Nous offrons un cadre théorique basé sur l'approche des représentations sociales, établi sur les notions de communication et de sens commun comme étant fondamentaux à la construction d'une identité culturelle. L'article conclut en suggérant que les musulmans occidentaux ne tiennent pas nécessairement des identités nationales et religieuses distinctes en tant que tel. Par contre, leurs expériences sociopolitiques reflètent nécessairement une compréhension sur comment être musulman dans un environnement occidental. Ceci suggère que la division entre les identités sociales est un artefact politique et scientifique imposé sur leur concept de soi de certains jeunes.

MOTS-CLÉS: musulmans, identité, religion, ethnicité, identité culturelle, citoyenneté

ABSTRACT

Western Muslims have been the subject of increasing negative media attention since 9/11. The Western Muslim community is feeling progressively marginalized as a result. One of the central themes that reappears in political discourse across Western countries is the compatibility of Islam in secular contexts. Identity plays a central role in illustrating the potential challenges Western Muslims face in negotiating their religious and national affiliations. The principal objective of this thesis is to explore and compare the religious and national identity development of Muslim young adults who were born and raised in Western contexts whose political discourses are increasingly targeting Muslims: Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen.

Our qualitative research employed narrative analysis to explore the experiences of Western Muslim young adults. A contextualized approach at the interdisciplinary crossroads of social identity theory and symbolic interactionism established the theoretical foundations of our analysis. This method appreciates how individuals make meanings of their own experience as well as how social contexts impact the extents to which these meanings can be made, in the formation of group identification. We recruited a total of 30 participants - fifteen males and fifteen females – within an age range of 18 to 25. There were ten participants from Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen each, and ten of the total participants were converts. Participants were recruited by word of mouth from youth groups as well as student associations, high schools, colleges, universities and Sunni mosques. A qualitative interview guide was developed and validated by the ethics supervision committee with open-ended questions used flexibly in a semi-structured format.

Article 1 explores the development of religious and national identities comparatively across political contexts. It addresses the following research question: how do Muslim young adults differ in their religious and national identity development across political contexts? This article identifies two themes central to the national identity of Western Muslims: citizenship and civic engagement. The expression of these themes differs according to the socio-political characteristics of each country. In Canada, participants related citizenship as inherent to their national identity, describing civic engagement as an obligation. In Germany and Denmark, citizenship reflects an ambivalence towards their national identity based on an uncertain relationship with the state. Civic engagement is then portrayed as a means of defending Islam in the public arena.

Article 2 explores the process by which Muslim young adults develop their religious identities, from one of parental heritage to one of personal choice. It addresses the following research question: how do national and religious identities develop in light of increasing islamophobia? This article reviews how some participants developed a significant anti-ethnic attitude towards the Muslim identity of their parents in their adolescence, deferring their religious development to that of peers and other sources. Underlying this process was a significant need to develop a perceived objective Muslim identity. We extrapolate how some Western Muslim youth require this objective Muslim identity to counter increasing islamophobia in socio-political discourse, and develop a sense of certainty in light of intra-religious ethnic divisions.

Article 3 looks at the changes that occur in the social identity configuration of converts upon acceptance of the Muslim faith. It addresses the following research questions: how does the political context impact the social identity development of Muslim converts? It explores the narratives of Muslim converts who experienced conflicts between their national and ethnic identities prior to conversion. The participants reveal how they revised their social identity configuration upon conversion, ultimately reversing their antagonistic relationship to their national identity. Their narratives relate how political realities are embedded in the perception and development of the Western Muslim identity, necessitating a revaluation of their national identity as a form of social critique. Our results demonstrate how socio-political experiences of discrimination and race are all significantly implicated in the process of conversion as well as Muslim identity development.

Article 4 explores the life narrative of Western Muslims, investigating how they develop multiple social identities as a function of personal experiences. It addresses the following research question: how do second-generation Muslims negotiate their multiple social identities in light of their unique life course trajectories? Taking a constructivist position towards the theoretical foundations of the bicultural identity and acculturation models, this article focuses on two major themes underlying second-generation identity development: the precedence of experience to social identities and the enmeshment of multiple social identities. It concludes by outlining the challenge embedded in social identity theory, which at once denotes both group membership as well as political categorization.

Article 5 proposes a novel approach to the relationship between religious and national identities of Western Muslims, in an attempt to overcome the political reification of social identity categories. It addresses the following research question:

how does one conceive of a Western Muslim young adult possessing several multiples social identities outside the bicultural and acculturation theory frameworks? We offer the conceptual framework of social representations as a means of understanding social identity development, which is established upon notions of communication and commonsensical knowledge as foundational to the understanding of cultural identity. It concludes by suggesting that Western Muslims do not necessarily hold distinct national and religious identities per se, but rather their understanding of the world is necessarily a reflection of being Muslim embedded within a Western space. The division between social identities can be considered a political artifact imposed upon their self-concept.

KEYWORDS: Muslims; identity; religion; ethnicity; cultural identity; citizenship

CHAPITRE I

INTRODUCTION GÉNÉRALE

1.1. Introduction

Western Muslims are increasingly the subject of social and political interest in social scientific research (Amer and Bagasare, 2013). In the advent of 9/11, research on the war on terror uncovered its disruptive impact on society, reinforcing divisions in perceptions of “us vs. them”. Such consequences have been especially significant for Muslims across North America and Europe, who have experienced increased discrimination and negative media attention (Afshar, 2013; Raz, 2006; Rousseau & Jamil, 2008). The compatibility of Islam in secular contexts is often challenged in contemporary political discourse, questioning in turn the civic integration of Western Muslims (Coppock & McGovern, 2014; Laurence, 2011). A recent systematic literature review highlights the social and psychological impact of the war on terror context for minority youth from Arab and Muslim backgrounds (Rousseau et al., 2015). The emotional rhetoric, discrimination and negative stereotyping targeting Muslims in Western discourse have provoked feelings of isolation, social exclusion, alienation and marginalization (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Ewing & Hoyler, 2008; Maira, 2008; Zaal, Salah, & Fine, 2007). The current socio-political context thus raises questions of identity and belongingness for many Western Muslims, who are increasingly portrayed as a threat to the security and values of Western societies. Identity negotiations and civic integration play essential roles in illustrating the challenges, and uncovering potential vulnerabilities, within religious/national identity development. This thesis aims to understand the social identity negotiations of Western Muslims who were born and raised in Western countries. In the interest of examining the impact of socio-political contexts, we compared the narratives of Western Muslim young adults across three cities: Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen.

We chose Montreal, Copenhagen and Berlin because of my intimate familiarity with their respective Muslim communities, which are often objects of political debate. We begin by presenting a history and overview of each country vis-à-vis its Muslim

minority population, emphasizing the political discourse surrounding Muslims at the time of the interviews. We then present our theoretical approach, detailing its interdisciplinary nature. This is followed by a review of the literature on the religious and national identity development of Western Muslims. Finally, we outline our research methodology and objectives, culminating in the presentation of each chapter of this thesis.

1.2. Western Muslims: an overview

The ontological foundations of the ‘Western Muslim’ category is fragmented, confounding a vast range of ethnic, racial and civic qualities. Roy (2004) argues that the Muslim identity in the West is, in fact, a neo-ethnic identity; global in scale, disassociated from its historic origins and possibly unrelated to religiosity. Though the ‘Muslim identity’ is an artifact of Western categorization (Roy, 2004; Said, 1994), Muslim communities in Western lands have unique features, which distinguish them from Muslim-majority countries. Here one must first consider how modernising and secularising factors have shaped Islam in the Western context, as discussed by Roy (2004).

The first major factor is the de-territorialisation of Islam. In Western countries, the Muslim community consists of many cultures within a secular state, as opposed to being hegemonic within a political context. This includes a transformation from cultural hegemony to a minority status and a diminishing political coercion to perceive Islam homogeneously. The second factor consists of the unlinking culture and Islam upon migration. Migrants from Muslim majority countries arrive with a ‘pristine ethnic culture’, whereby religious and ethnic identities are experienced in unison (Roy, 2004). Upon migration, however, a culture affiliated with Islam become ‘ethnic’ thereby sharing the religion with other ‘similarly Islamic ethnic’ cultures.

Children for example learn a new mother tongue separated from their parent's ethno-religious identity. The Muslim identity thus becomes global and disassociated from its ethnic baggage. Roy (2004) argues this is part and parcel of the Westernisation process of the Muslim identity. Religious elements of one's culture become salient, and the thought of the Muslim community grows from a localized community with boundaries, to an imaginary community spanning all regions and cultures.

The third factor is the necessity for many Western-born Muslims to experience as 'objective' – to feel they follow the 'true' Islamic faith. Objectification is described by Entelis et al. (1996) as a process by which ontological questions enter an individual's consciousness as a result of their religion's minority status. It is primarily a Western phenomenon, seen across religions, and follows a similar philosophical orientation of self-actualization where personal experience is given primacy. Roy (2004) argues that the process of objectification is foundational to the wide range of observable Muslim group, from liberals to fundamentalists. The experience of objectivity is predicated on the experience of feeling like one's Islam is 'pure' and free of cultural impurities. Roy (2004) argues that Western born-again Muslims, like in other faiths, are searching for truth and authentic faith, not theological knowledge per se. Muslims are especially in search of faith founded on truth, with directives that can be instantly understood and followed. The break between culture and Islam, second-generation children and immigrant parents, ushers a desire for direct access to religious texts as a means of self-certifying an absolutely 'authentic' religiosity. Roy (2004) adds that "the knowledge [the Muslim] is seeking should fit with the sudden feeling of being in touch with truth." Though objectification has led to an Islamic revivalism, this does not necessarily entail a return to form of Islam free of culture, but rather a call towards Islamicising modernity (Roy, 2004).

These factors provide a glimpse in how the West has transformed the experience of Islam, though it is also important to underline how the ‘Muslim’ identity simultaneously constitutes a political category devoid of religious significance. Here Jenkins’ (2014) distinction between groups and categories plays an important role. While a group denotes one’s experiential sense of membership to a self-defined collectivity, a category relates to the classification of a collectivity above and beyond the will of those being classified. This allows, for example, for the Muslim identity to be politically identical to Arab for example, thereby embedding it with significant ethnic elements. This subject will be unpacked much more thoroughly in this thesis, but is nonetheless worthy of mention in any introduction of ‘Western Muslims.’

1.2.1. Muslims in Germany

An estimated 4.8 million Muslims live in Germany, compromising 5.8% of the population (Hackett, 2015), consisting mostly of Turks, but also Bosnians, Moroccans, Iranians and Afghans. Beginning in the 1960s, the German Muslim population increased drastically due to the influx of Turkish guest workers who were solicited to emigrate due to shortage in labor. When these Turkish ‘guest workers’ arrived, they were welcomed with acclaim, with the president of the Federal Labor Agency embracing the millionth guest worker to arrive (Bartsch, Brandt, & Steinvorth, 2010). The guest workers however stayed in Germany with no intent on leaving, eventually bringing their families over to the surprise of German politicians who expected these guest workers to eventually return to Turkey. Germany was not keen on naturalizing these Turkish guest workers, declaring they are ‘not a land of immigration’ (Nathans, 2004). By failing to publicly acknowledge the presence of these Turkish families, they denied them citizenship for several decades until finally questions of integration arose in the 1990s (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2008).

Today, a large portion of the German Muslim population is a by-product of the guest worker program.

The Muslim populations of Germany have been seen with increasing suspicion since the turn of the century (Rytter & Pedersen, 2014). German Muslims in turn feel ostracised by the media, feeling the latter portrays them as outside the fold of mainstream society despite the Muslim's communities lengthy migration history in the country (Heeren & Zick, 2014). Over the course of this research, issues regarding immigration permeated the political landscape. These discussions often focused on Muslim migrants, who were accused of living casually off state welfare in addition to not integrating German state values (Holtz, Dahinden, & Wagner, 2013b). Also salient during the time of our interviews was the comment by Christian Wulff, the then-federal president, that 'Islam belongs to Germany.' His statement sparked an uproar among German politicians who challenged it, thereby highlighting the elusiveness of German Muslims in national identity politics (Dowling, 2010).

1.2.2. Muslims in Denmark

The Muslim population in Denmark is steadily climbing. Denmark has an estimated population of 230,000 Muslims, compromising 4.1% of the population (Hackett, 2015). Like Germany, Denmark received an influx of guest workers from Turkey, Yugoslavia, Spain, Morocco, and Pakistan from the 1960s onwards, who worked mostly in factories and farms (Mikkelsen, 2001). Denmark later attempted to stop the flow of migrants in 1973, but migration continued irrespectively; guest workers solicited their families to join them, and Denmark saw a large-scale influx of refugees seeking asylum from Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Bosnia, Albania and Somalia in 1984.

Over the years, Denmark has increasingly become more fearful of perceived threats to Danish culture, and has especially targeted Muslim immigrants in this regard (Gudrun Jensen, 2008). Pia Kjærsgaard, the former president of the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*, the third largest political party in Danish politics at the time), famously said in a debate regarding the Danish identity around the time of our interviews: '*it's hard to define, but it is a feeling I have that I like being Danish, and maybe don't like Pakistan and Romania*' (Aaen, 2010). In addition, the socio-political climate was still affected by the infamous cartoon controversy of 2006, which demarcates an especially upsetting time for Danish Muslims who felt their faith was unduly under attack. Indeed, when the publications were popularized in the Middle East with the intention of soliciting an apology from the Danish government, this backfired and "seriously impeded the Danish Muslim's claim for some kind of recognition of hurt religious feelings, rather than promoting them" (Lindekilde, 2008).

1.2.3. Muslims in Quebec

Muslims have been in Canada since the turn of the 20th century, consisting mostly of South Slavic migrants but also from Syria and Lebanon, seeking agricultural opportunities (Yousif, 1993). According to StatsCanada (2011), over 1 million individuals now identify themselves as Muslim in Canada, compromising 3.2% of the population. Two-thirds of the Canadian Muslim population can be found in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver combined, with the Montreal Muslim population consisting of 221,000. In the 1970s, a first wave of Muslim migrants from the South-Asian subcontinent, as well as the Middle East, allocating mostly to Ontario but also in Quebec. Once Quebec began selecting francophone migration contexts over others in the 1990s, this ushered a second wave of Muslim migrants from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Today, according to the Ministère de l'Immigration et des

Communautés culturelles (2008), Muslims of North African and the Middle Eastern heritage account for more than 60% of Muslims living in Quebec, 20% from South-Asia, and 15% from West and Central Asia.

Muslims are increasingly the objects of political debate in Quebec. Though Muslims experienced discrimination before 9/11, it rose sharply thereafter (Rousseau, Hassan, Moreau & Thombs, 2011). During the time of our interviews, Quebec politicians and media outlets questioned the extent to which the state should accommodate minority and immigrant cultural practices (resulting in the reasonable accommodation debates). These debates raised several concerns regarding the civic integration of Quebec Muslims – more than any other religious group – focusing on issues such as the place of the *hijab* (headscarf) in Quebec society, the establishment of prayer spaces, etc. (Sharify-Funk, 2010). The islamophobic wave in Quebec differs from other Canadian provinces due to the nature of the province's political uncertainty regarding statehood; its linguistically Francophone identity; its unique set of North African Muslim migrants; and a host of other national and international elements (McAndrew & Bakhshaei, 2011).

1.3. Theoretical framework of identity

Gleason (1983) provides a comprehensive history of ‘identity’ to shed light upon its usage, outlining its inception within academia. The term was first introduced within the framework of American national character studies; a domain of research popularized in the post-World War 2 era, which attempted to remedy the dilemma of nationalism in the midst of great ethnic diversity. This era of urbanisation and globalization also sparked the theory of acculturation, which coincided with the development of identity within social psychology. Thus, scholars were no longer studying how cultures interacted, but rather how an immigrant with a particular ethnic identity acculturates the national identity of a host society. The social-

psychological conception of identity also dates back to Erikson's (1994) innovative research on psychosocial stages of development. By combining both psychological and anthropological elements in his theory of identity development, the impact of his psychosocial theory permeated almost every field in the humanities.

Nonetheless, the academic articulation of identity remains elusive, with no clear consensus as to what it means, either between or within disciplines. Indeed, there were over 170 academic definitions of identity in circulation in the 1980's alone (Gleason, 1983). Ever since the explosion of identity research in the 80's, some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that 'identity' has evolved into a convenient buzzword employed to ambiguously discuss any component of the self - and get away with it (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) are thus stark critics of identity researchers. They argue too many academics readily employ 'identity' in their theoretical paradigms when, in fact, their research may not require it; an appropriate concept that envelops 'all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identifications' (Rogers Brubaker & Frederick Cooper, 2000). They blame the abundant misuse of the term on the academic success of identity research, compelling scholars to address questions of identity almost necessarily. As per their critique, our usage of identity will be explicitly outlined to avoid misunderstanding, thereby justifying its inclusion. Furthermore, in accordance with the exploratory approach of this research and in light of Jenkins' (2014) critique of academic isolationism on the subject of identity, our theoretical approach is interdisciplinary in nature, taking both social psychology and sociology into consideration. The following reviews these multiple but coalescing understandings of identity.

1.3.1. Psychological approach

Acculturation theory has a lengthy history in anthropology and sociology, dating back to the 1930s (Padilla & Perez, 2003). According to the Padilla and Perez (2003), the first holistic psychological model offered to acculturation theory was first introduced by Teske and Nelson (1974), that suggested individuals change in personal traits. It was Berry (1990) however who first offered a model in which the ethnic identity of a minority individual interacted with the majority identity of a population according to processes of assimilation, integration, rejection and deculturation. The conceptualization of ethnic identity is significant in this regard, although scholars have historically disagreed on its nature and its manner of relating to other identities (Phinney, 1990). In general, ethnic identity development is perceived as a process by which adolescent minorities learn more about their ethnic heritage. This in turn develops a stronger affiliation to the ethnic group, increasing its value and defending its legitimacy as a social identity (Phinney et al., 2001). As such, social identity theory can be a useful framework as a means of depicting the process by which an ethnic identity is negotiated.

The social identity approach is one of the foremost identity models in social psychology, consisting of social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and later social categorisation theory by Tajfel's student, Turner (Turner & Onorato, 1999). Initially, Henri Tajfel was concerned with the hyper-focus accorded to individuals in social psychology, and thus developed a social-centric model based on intergroup relationships to explain incidence of prejudice and conflict (Jenkins, 2014). Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that our group affiliations formulate social identities within our self-concept; this creates a sense of belonging that favors the in-group and belittles the out-group. In other words, a social identity relates to group membership based on the sense of commonality we derive from the characteristics we share with others (Jenkins, 2014; Tajfel & P., 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Commonalities are often characterized by language, religion, ancestry, ethnicity and citizenship – its role serves as a reference group within our self-concept (Baker, 2000; Hendry, Mayer, &

Kloep, 2007; Jenkins, 2014). Group identification occurs, Tajfel (1981) argues, even if one were to assign group memberships arbitrarily. The ultimate purpose of social identity development is to improve self-evaluation (Turner & Onorato, 1999). Thus, individuals will self-categorize themselves according to their unique socio-political environments in a manner which produces a sense of cohesion and belongingness to a group.

The Muslim social identity is often depicted in research as an ethnic identity related to one's ethnic heritage vis-à-vis the mainstream identity within a framework of acculturation. As such, the two most common theoretical frameworks we found employed in psychology with Western Muslims are the acculturation and bicultural identity models (e.g. Britto & Amer, 2007; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013; Zaal, Salah, & Fine, 2007). Berry's acculturation models (Berry, 1974, 1997) were designed to evaluate an ethnic minority's perceived value of maintaining both ethnic and mainstream cultural affiliations. While Berry (2009) admits the model was first conceived to assess attitudes, it was later modified to evaluate identities. Accordingly, negotiating ethnic and mainstream identities produces four distinct categories: 1) integrated, in which both identities are highly valued, 2) marginalised, if none of the identities are valued, 3) assimilated, when the mainstream culture is valued over heritage, and 4) separation, when the ethnic culture is given preference over the mainstream culture. To this, the acculturation model predicts that individuals who strongly identify with both their cultural and national identities will experience a greater sense of well-being (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006).

The bicultural identity model on the other hand was designed to evaluate the degree in which mainstream and ethnic cultural identities integrate according to their perceived compatibility (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). In turn, according to the authors, highly integrated bicultural individuals assume hyphenated identities or perceive themselves within a third culture produced by mixing both

cultural identities together, and are therefore capable of switching seamlessly between ethnic and mainstream cultural settings. The model also suggests that perceived conflict between the cultural and mainstream identities best predicts psychological well-being – better identity integration presumes lower internal conflict (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). As such, in these and in social psychological models overall, the basic premise of identity research in psychology is to explore wellbeing of minorities as contingent on identity integration.

There are some caveats employing bicultural and acculturation identity models with Western Muslims however. First, the acculturation and bicultural identity models were developed primarily for first generation migrants, and Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) underline the lack of research demonstrating applicability with descendants. Indeed, research suggests descendants often traverse significantly different integration pathways (Alba & Nee, 1997). Second, the characterization of a Muslim identity is subject of debate, often confounding ethnicity, culture and religion (Said, 1994). In Britain, for example, the Muslim identity appears to confound both religious and ethnic affiliations in public discourse (Meer, Dwyer, & Modood, 2010). The elusiveness of the Muslim identity results in studies employing divergent terminologies in order to recruit and portray Muslim participants (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). Third, and central to this research, while scholars generally acknowledge the multiplicity of social identities within individuals outside the context of migration, we still have a limited understanding regarding the nature of the relationship between multiple social identities (Ramarajan, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Fourth, the notion of a national culture, which these models address vis-à-vis the ethnic culture, is dubious in-and-of-itself (Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013). Many Western countries now demonstrate a sprawling cultural diversity which blur the lines between mainstream and minority cultural groups. Fifth, acculturation research has difficulties distinguishing between the psychological and behavioural dimensions of a cultural identity (Ward, 2013). Ward (2013) argues this establishes

“the necessity of specifying and clarifying which aspects of cultural identity, under which conditions, and in connection with which adaptive outcomes this association occurs.” Relating to the conditions, Ward, Fox, Wilson, Stuart, and Kus (2010) underline the importance of the socio-political dimensions in which minorities live when discussing their ethnic and mainstream identity negotiations. These concerns demand novel methods in approaching the identity development of Western Muslims, beyond the binary scopes of acculturation and bicultural identity models. Thus, our research design foregoes the experimental application of the acculturation and bicultural models in favor of giving Western Muslim young adults their own voice in relating the development and negotiation of their social identities. To do this, we propose a contextualized approach which considers how Muslims give meaning to their social identities according to their socio-political contexts, while nonetheless negotiating their religious and national identities simultaneously.

1.3.2. Sociological approach

In sociology, identity research is less interested in wellbeing, and more focused on the process by which individuals define themselves within their social environments. Jenkins (2014), for example, classifies the social contexts in which individuals interact into three deeply interconnected yet distinct orders. The individual order relates to embodied individuals and their unique thought processes. The interaction order refers then to the relationships between individuals. Finally, the institutional order relates to established social patterns of behaviours and organization. This institutional order is consequential to the discussion of identity development, as it pertains to the socio-political environment’s potential to assert a mode of identification upon the individual order. In other words, the social environment can significantly impact the process – known as symbolic interactionism - in which individuals relate to themselves in terms of social identities.

Symbolic interactionism was coined as a term within sociology to depict how individuals interact via shared symbols, alluding to the construction of identity as a social artifact (Blumer, 1969; Peek, 2005). According to Blumer (1980), this approach suggests that interactions take place as a function of the meaning one ascribes to the objects with which one interacts. These meanings are established however as a result of social interactions with one's environment. In other words, one's interpretation of the social environment sets the precedent for how identities develop. In turn, the self-concept is shaped by one's social environment, as they define themselves according to the perceptions of others. As such, social identities can be further classified into groups and categories. Groups are self-defined, whereas categories refer to definitions of a collectivity outside the members' hands (Turner & Bourhis, 1996). In this sense, a group relate to members' actual sense of belongingness to the collection of individuals as a point of reference, and a category is defined and maintained via the commonsensical knowledge structures of a society (Jenkins, 2014). The group/category problematizes our understanding of social identity development by introducing a decidedly political dimension. Whereas in social identity theory the concept of group is generically established upon a shared collection of characteristics (Jenkins, 2014), the sociological emphasis on categories introduces the possibility for individuals to be ascribed social identities beyond their volition. According to Jenkins (2014), this allows for the nominal identification of a group – in our case, Muslim – to possibly be experienced differently according to diverging political contexts and processes of social categorisation. This observation sheds a critical light upon the acculturation and bicultural identity models, which generally adopt a nominal approach towards Western Muslim identity research, disregarding the socio-political impact on the human experience of an identity according to its context. While recent research has begun to explore the Muslim identity as a political category of identification (Gudrun Jensen, 2008), little is known how Western Muslims negotiate the dialectic process of group affiliation and

social categorisation within political environments which view Muslims with suspicion (Coppock & McGovern, 2014).

Arriving thus at a crossroads between psychology and sociology, social identities are now understood to be “actively produced, reproduced, and transformed, through a series of social processes” (Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002). The constructivist position has become one of the predominant theoretical paradigms when exploring how social structures, such as political environments, impact social identity development (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). Our research thus takes a constructivist position towards social identity development, assessing the cultural narratives Muslim young adults employ to define their social identities within particular sociopolitical environments. This research is investigative in nature, utilizing a qualitative hypothesis-generating approach to produce questions for prospective research with Western Muslims. Our approach is also concordant with Kurtine’s co-constructivist perspective (see Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001). It incorporates an existential element into identity, suggesting that although the environment actively ‘constructs’ the identities of individuals, they are in turn responsible for its development. As such, the agency lies in the individual’s capacity to transform their social context, prescribing a moral responsibility for their own identity development (Berman et al., 2001). The interplay of social context/individual occurs in both directions simultaneously. Jenkins (2014) emphasizes this concurrent exchange, suggesting that it is impossible to examine how the social context influences an individual without taking into account how the individual affects the social context at the same time. Like Ozyurt (2013), whose use of narrative analysis investigates how Muslims give meaning to their experiences reflecting both their individuality as well as their environment, our research thus assesses the cultural narratives Muslim youth employ to define who they are within sociopolitical contexts. As such, we favored an inductive analysis of our qualitative

data in the spirit of constructionism (Charmaz, 2008), as opposed to the theoretical imposition of *a priori* frameworks of the bicultural identity and acculturation models.

1.4. Previous work on religious and national identity negotiation of Western Muslims

Despite the increased interest in researching Western Muslims, publications on Western Muslim identity development are lacking, and the research methodologies of those that exist vary widely (Sirin & Balsano, 2007). Specifically, little is known about how Western Muslims develop their religious identities in Western contexts (Thomas & Sanderson, 2011). As explained earlier, social psychological studies with Western Muslims often employ bicultural and acculturation identity models for Muslim youth, exploring effects of discrimination and identity conflict (Holtz et al., 2013b; Hutchison, Lubna, Goncalves-Portelinha, Kamali, & Khan, 2015; Sirin & Fine, 2007), gender (Mirza, 2013; Ozyurt, 2013) and family dynamics (Verkuyten, Thijs, & Stevens, 2012). These models are applied on the premise that second-generation Muslims are recipients of ethnic and religious heritage inherited by their parents. Other studies may not explicitly refer to either acculturation or bicultural models with Western Muslims, yet nevertheless employ similar frameworks by evaluating their social identities for compatibility and affiliation strength (e.g. Verkuyten et al., 2012).

The relationship between a Muslim's religious identity and national identities are now understood as a product of social and political forces (Meer, 2008). Previously, it was presumed that incidence of conflict (i.e. discrimination) in Western countries may result in multiple, incompatible identities among Muslim youth, with explicit boundaries delineating national and religious identities (Zine, 2001). Research indicated Muslim youth develop conflicting identities due to the discrepancies between parents and society, or experiences of discrimination (Whittaker, Hardy,

Lewis, & Buchan, 2005; Zine, 2001). Indeed, psychological well-being is found to be correlated to identity conflict among Muslims who experience discrimination (Sirin & Fine, 2007; Zaal et al., 2007). This echoes other minority research, which found that negative psychological outcomes are associated with a multicultural individual's incapacity to act in accordance to all their cultural affiliations (David, Okazaki, & Saw, 2009). At the same time, research indicates that Muslim youth report better psychological and sociocultural adaptation in Western countries than both followers of Eastern faiths such as Buddhism, or those not practicing any faith whatsoever (Sam, Vedder, Ward, & Horenczyk, 2006). The authors argue that religiosity among Western Muslims serves as a protective factor which promotes sociocultural adaptation. Ward (2013) also found that the Muslim identity is conducive to the promotion of prosocial attitudes, while regulating negative behaviours.

Recent qualitative studies have taken a more constructivist approach towards a Muslim identities, emphasizing the dynamic nature of national and religious identity development as embedded within Western contexts (Gest, 2015). Chaudhury and Miller (2008), for example, examined how the Muslim identity of Bangladeshi American Muslim adolescents were impacted by a variety of social factors, including national attitudes towards Islam. Awad (2010) found that highly acculturated Western Arab American Muslims experienced a higher degree of discrimination compared to Christians, suggesting that acculturation is not a protective factor in-and-of-itself from discrimination. Tinker and Smart (2012), found that Muslim schools in the UK react to Islamophobic discourse by both essentializing the Muslim identity as different from Western society, while simultaneously promoting a nationally embedded Muslim identity. Ali (2014) offers an account of Muslim social identities based on life-history interviews, revealing how North American Muslim youth experience the negative portrayal of Islam in public discourse. Employing social representations as a theoretical foundation, Sartawi and Sammut (2012) provide an ethnographic account of bicultural Muslim-British identities. They depict

how diverging meaning systems of the Muslim and British identities produce conflict within the implicit moments of everyday life. Of the studies that compare the impact of socio-political contexts, Fleischmann and Phalet (2015) found that increased perceived discrimination in Belgium, Netherlands and Sweden increased the conflict between religious and national identities. Zimmerman (2015) found that French Muslim women perceived religious practice to be associated with denying integration into French society.

Similarly, Ozyurt (2013) explores how Muslim women in the Netherlands and the United States construct a self-narrative amid their religious and national identities. She uses narrative analysis to investigate how her participants give meaning to their experiences, reflecting both their individuality as well as the environment around them. Ozyurt (2013) finds that successful negotiation of religious and national identities depends on the ability to process a coherent self-narrative in which these women felt a part of both worlds. She argues that the actual compatibility between two cultural identities itself was less impactful, referring here to normative bicultural and acculturation theories. In this sense, Ozyurt's (2013) research has been particularly inspirational as a theoretical paradigm which our research attempts to emulate. These studies reflect how Western Muslims are constantly contesting prevalent imagery of Islam, while negotiating the relationship of their national and religious identities (Zine, 2001).

1.5. Socio-political elements involved in social identity development

1.5.1. Islamophobia

The process of identity formation has changed over the 20th century, adding new dimensions to the traditional foundations such as religion and family (Thompson,

1995). Kellner (2011) argues that a ‘media culture’ has established ‘cultural industries’ upon which individuals construct their identities. These media-driven cultural industries define the foundation of a social identity, outlining ‘us/them’ categorizations, sexual orientations and social classes (Kellner, 2011). Muslims have experienced discrimination prior to 9/11 (Rousseau et al., 2011), though their presence received far more political attention afterwards (Ogan, Willnat, Pennington, & Bashir, 2013). With this, politicians across the Western world have become outspoken with their fears of Islamic fundamentalism, sometimes even making it a focus of their political campaign (Morey & Yaqin, 2011). Muslims are often associated with violence in the media, portrayed along ethnic stereotypes and as potential threats (Bankoff, 2003; Clarke & Hoggett, 2004; Merskin, 2004; Shaheen, 2003).

Islamophobia is a term that attempts to encompass the results of the media’s sensationalist and biased reporting of Muslims. Richardson, Muir, Smith, Muslims, and Trust (2004) describe the fundament of islamophobia, in which ‘Muslims are made to feel that they do not truly belong here – they feel that they are not truly accepted, let alone welcomed, as full members of … society.’ Thus, islamophobia is based upon negative stereotypes of Islam, propagated by the media. With Muslims so explicitly in the spotlight, it is of upmost importance to uncover the reality of islamophobia and its effects on Muslims (Allen & Nielsen, 2002). Meer and Modood (2009) explore why islamophobia is met with less sympathy than other forms of discrimination in public forums. They suggest four reasons: Islam is perceived as a conscious decision that is made, rather than it being implicated by of one’s socio-demographic environment; the current Western zeitgeist holds a particular disdain towards anything considered “non-science,” especially religion; religious minorities, particularly Muslims, are often viewed as not willing to integrate, as highlighted by the head scarf (including niqab and burqa) debates appearing throughout western countries; and finally Islam’s perceived relationship to violence and terrorism. In

summary, the saliency of the Muslim social identity as well as the challenges reported make the Muslim youth population an appropriate sample to research identity formation along with the issues they face on a day-to-day basis.

The subject of islamophobia remains nonetheless elusive, due primarily to the lack of consistency in definition (Kayaoglu, 2012). Scholars have attempted to disentangle islamophobia (see e.g. Allen, 2010; Esposito & Kalin, 2011; Sayyid & Vakil, 2010) and, while their discussions go beyond the scope of this thesis, a special note must be given to Sayyid and Vakil's (2010) juxtaposition of islamophobia and personal agency. The authors illustrate how islamophobia's *raison d'être* is to contain Muslim autonomy in one of two ways: denying political agency (and its accompanying capacity of self-definition) and containing their agency within a framework that favours Western values. Islamophobia is thus endemic within a discourse of a growing Western Muslim minority population that seeks acknowledgement of its presence and its civic right of choice. Indeed, the authors argue that the rising incidence of islamophobia is itself an epiphenomenon of the Muslim community's increasing agency. Western Muslims then navigate and challenge the tide of islamophobia by constructing a counter-discourse that delegitimizes its claims. Agency, as such, is central in any discussion on islamophobia.

1.5.2 Citizenship across political contexts

Experiences of national identity are intimately linked to socio-historic formulations of citizenship. Brubaker (1992) famously reviewed how notions of citizenship waver according to divergent formulations of nationhood in his comparison of France and Germany. These countries, Brubaker (1992) argues, had diverging political interests in how expansive citizenship they were willing to allow. For Germany, this led to a formulation of citizenship that favored ethnic Germans to the exclusion of non-

German immigrants, including descendants. This governmental attitude in the 1960s produced a precedent in which several generations following the initial migration of Turkish migrant workers were denied citizenship and thus, symbolically, a ‘right to belong.’ Considering that German residents receive the same benefits as citizens – and Germany does not allow dual citizenship - the policy changes later allowing the acquisition of citizenship status around the turn of the 21st century did not provide enough incentive for Turkish descendants to forfeit their Turkish passport (Bauder, 2008; Brubaker, 1992). As a result, Bauder (2008) argues German minorities are often in a disadvantaged position regarding the cultural capital that is associated with citizenship in society.

Indicative of its political attitude towards cultural minorities, Denmark, like Germany, has been historically more restrictive in according citizenship status to migrants in comparison to other EU states (Howard, 2005). Muslims in particular have been a decisive element in the government’s policy changes ever since 2002, with citizenship restrictions being applied to this minority population’s migration flow and naturalization process (Kofman, 2005). The objective of these policies was to ultimately protect the sanctity of Danish values from the accelerated growth of Muslims whose values are considered antithetical to liberal Western democracies. Both Germany and Denmark do not recognize Islam as a religion protected by the constitution (Savage, 2004). In turn, second and third-generation Muslims in Western Europe are now more likely than previous generations to resist conforming to the cultural norms of society, for fear of losing their Muslim identity in the process, despite facilitated citizenship processes (Savage, 2004).

Canada on the other hand, a country whose growth and economy has depended primarily on migrants, is more liberal than Germany in the issuing of citizenship status; it offers migrants a naturalization process while designating descendants as *bona fide* Canadian citizens (Bauder, 2008). Although our research took place in

Quebec, immigrants in this province generally feel a sense of belonging to Canada first and foremost, positioning themselves in opposition to Quebec's independence as a result (Kymlicka, 2011). Canada thus differs enormously from both Germany and Denmark in the formal designation of citizenship among its migrant communities. Both Germany and Canada however demonstrate various challenges in the *informal citizenship* of its minority populations, which denotes the social recognition of migrants as national compatriots beyond paperwork. This distinction also relates to two of the Western definitions of citizenship: legal status and sense of belonging (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). Bauder (2008) here suggests the importance of race, in which non-White populations can be socially and economically disadvantaged irrespective of their citizenship status. The divide between formal (civic) and informal (ethnocentric) citizenship is flimsy however; some Western countries which facilitate the naturalization of migrant descendants as a birth right, such as the Netherlands, still demand that Muslims acclimate their belief system to that of majority society (Bloemraad et al., 2008; Joppke, 2003). This brief history of the three nation-states depicts the idiosyncratic elements of nationhood and citizenship, setting the stage for how our Western Muslim participants developed discrepant understandings of their national identities.

1.5.3 Muslim identity development within family and peer environments

The family unit remains a significant contributor to the construction of an individual's identity. The role of parents in identity formation dates back to the very origins of its research. Marcia (1966), in his earliest formulations of identity status, emphasized the importance of parental values. Since then, the majority of research devoted to identity agents has primarily focused on parents, and to a lesser extent on peers (Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002).

Peek (2005) found that the religious identity of young Muslims typically falls within three progressive categories of development: ascribed, chosen and declared. Ascribed identity relates to youth who reflect little upon their Muslim identity, inheriting the group membership from their parents. The identity is then considered chosen when the youth then embarks on a process of introspection, and overcomes the identity's taken-for-grantedness. Finally, Muslim youth are in the final stage of their identity development when it's declared to others in spite of – and often as a result of – collective threat. Among Muslims in the Netherlands, Verkuyten et al. (2012) found that the religiosity of children was closely linked to the religiosity of their parents, independent of ethnicity. This however changes as the children reach adolescence, where personal efforts in religious practice supersede the parent's religiosity (Verkuyten et al., 2012).

Studies show that friends are also significant identity agents - individuals who possesses the potential of greatly affecting another's identity formation (Sugimura & Shimizu, 2010). The degree of influence that peers have on an adolescent has usually been investigated, until recently, in relation to parents (Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002). Zine (2001) found that Muslim adolescents find a lot of support from their Muslim peers in school, whom they often refer to as 'brothers' or 'sisters.' In fact, Muslim adolescents and young adults consistently seek each other's company in education settings to promote and protect their Muslim identity, as highlighted by the available Muslim Student's Associations. Acevedo, Chaudhary, and Ellison (2014) relate that an increasing number of Muslim friends is one of the key factors that strengthens the Muslim identity. Roberts, Koch, and Johnson (2001) suggest that an individuals' religiosity a product of their social experiences with families as well as peers. Stark and Bainbridge (1980) make a note of the importance of friendship bonds in religiosity: highly religious people tend to befriend other highly religious people.

1.6. Research questions and methodology

1.6.1. Research questions

Our research looks at the narratives of second-generation Muslim young adults with the intention of exploring the various social identities they may have, guided by the research question: how do second-generation Muslim young adults develop and negotiate their religious and national identities in light of their socio-political environments? By comparing the narratives of Muslims across three cities, we addressed the following research objectives:

- 1) Explore how Muslim young adults in Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen develop their religious and national identities.
 - a. How do national and religious identities develop in each specific socio-political context?
 - b. How do Muslim young adults differ in their religious and national identity development across socio-political contexts?
- 2) Document how western Muslims negotiate their multiple social identities in light of their unique socio-political contexts.
- 3) Analyse the ways in which Western Muslim young adults religious and national identity negotiations inform the applicability of the bicultural and acculturation theoretical models.

1.6.2 Research Methodology

The participants were composed of Western Muslims from Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen. Of note is that our research differentiates between Muslim migrants

and Western-born Muslims. The latter, and our focus, consists exclusively of Western-born individuals. There was a total of 30 participants - fifteen males and fifteen females – within an age range of 18 to 25; ten participants from each city, respectively. Ten of the participants were converts. Participants were recruited by word of mouth from youth groups as well as student associations, high schools, colleges, universities and Sunni mosques. The majority of the participants were undergraduate students (or recent graduates), with a small number having just completed high school. The ethnicities of the participants varied widely, as we did not want our results to reflect any one particular migrant heritage. Participants in Berlin and Copenhagen were recruited in the summer of 2012, and Montreal participants in the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed in accordance with the theoretical objectives of this thesis. We developed the open-ended questions ourselves to broadly address social identity development. The interview process did not strictly adhere to the open interview guide and - beyond our initial question and the thematic premise of social identities - intentionally adapted to each participant's narrative. Our initial questions always began as follows however: "How do you identify yourself?" Thereupon, we specifically discussed the various social identities to which they affiliate. Taking a life-course approach, we not only detailed their affiliation to social identities, but underscored more precisely their unique, experiential developments: "How have you come to see yourself as a [Muslim/German/Pakistani]?" We discussed the intelligibility of each social identity, asking the participants how they learned to describe themselves in such a manner. We then delved into the details of their identity negotiations, should the participants offer such narratives. Finally, we explored how their self-esteem and perceived well-being fluctuated according to each social identity development, as well as their interactions.

The interview guide was approved by the ethics supervision committee, promoting a non-threatening two-way dialogue. Interviews were held in the time and place of the participant's choice to ensure comfort, and to avoid the possibility that predetermined settings (e.g. a mosque) may impact the discussion. As such, interview settings varied widely between homes, university classrooms and mosques. An interpreter was present during Danish interviews in case participants requested a translator; the primary author speaks fluent English, German, French and Arabic. In light of each participant's unique identity development, and according to the constructivist position, the questions were open-ended. Thus, the interviews always began with a general questioning of their social identities without insisting that they ascribe themselves to any particular social identity besides Muslim (the recruitment criterion).

The research methodology was qualitative in accordance with the objectives, utilizing a thematic content analysis to investigate the data. Thematic content analysis is considered the foundational method for qualitative research, and is recommended for its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a method, it is fundamentally independent of any epistemological framework (as opposed to grounded theory for example) and can therefore be applied along any theoretical orientation. This is important, as our research is not epistemologically positivist as is generally the norm in social psychology, though it begins with a basic theoretical foundation that affirms the existence of religious and national identities. Otherwise, the basic premise of our qualitative analysis strategy is to explore the development of, and relationship between, social identities without reifying any social identity model. This necessitates a rich description of the data set. Accordingly, the goal of thematic context analysis is to identify, analyze and report patterns within data, thereby organizing the data in a way that illustrates its richness. Reviews of thematic analysis highlight the lack of details concerning the selection of themes in qualitative studies, many of whom state that the themes simply 'emerge' from the data (Attride-

Stirling, 2001). Thus, in line with Braun and Clark's (2006) thoughts, this article will attempt to acknowledge our theoretical positions by recognizing each theme as a decision, as well as clarify its selection.

Our thematic analysis takes a contextualized approach which appreciates how individuals make meanings of their own experiences, as well as how social contexts impact the extents to which these meanings can be made. In other words, it "works to both reflect reality, and to pick and unravel the surface of 'reality'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To do this, we followed several guidelines as per Braun & Clarke's (2006) advice. First, we provided a rich description of the entire data set. Then, patterns within the data set were explored both thematically as well as inductively. In other words, although we searched for specific themes throughout the data set, we also considered themes that are unrelated to our research objectives. Finally, we approached the data set on both latent as well as semantic levels. In light of the range of topics – such as identity, social influences, etc., all well within the scope of a young adult's understanding – there is much to be taken at face value, hence the semantic level. Nevertheless, more complicated dynamics, such as the relationship between social identities, may not be expressed, as overtly, thus a certain level of understanding was required from our part to appreciate the latent meanings of what is said.

We produced a verbatim account of all verbal utterances due to the conversational nature of the interviews, giving particular attention to proper use of punctuation in order to properly capture rhetoric (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the transcription process was complete, we immersed ourselves in the interview through repeated active readings, searching for patterns and meanings. Two coders, myself and my research supervisor, coded independently and met regularly during the process to ensure thematic cohesion and discuss discrepancies. The coding process was both 'theory-driven', with our specific research questions in mind, as well as 'data-

driven', to remain conscious of significant pieces of information seemingly unrelated to our objectives. This process particularly unearthed the need for introspection and reflexivity, which became foundational for my section on researcher subjectivity. Afterwards, we sorted out the different codes within broader themes, meeting with my supervisor once a month for several months as we created the larger thematic tree. Analyses were then written for individual themes, not only highlighting what each theme illustrates individually, but also tying them into the overall research objectives. The primary author then selected several key themes pertinent to the discussion of social identity development.

1.6.3. Researcher subjectivity

This project is a conglomeration of several personal and social interests. As a Muslim born to Egyptian parents in Montreal and then raised in Berlin, the question of identity has always been salient throughout the course of my life. Figuring out how I fit in with friends, family and larger society, overcoming experiences of discrimination while negotiating my religious and national identities was never a solitary exercise. I quickly realized many other Muslim youths shared similar concerns, and there were often few avenues available to tackle such difficult life questions. As such, the quest for exploring and understand identity dynamics began at a young age. But it was never only about understanding identity for myself. Fortunately, both my mother and older brother were great inspirations in giving back to those around us, and personal knowledge development was celebrated as a means of improving our social environment for the better. Thus, when I later became active in different youth groups, eventually spearheading socially-active projects myself, I increasingly observed the subject of identity to be central in the contemporary

distress of many Western Muslim youth, who never found the words to articulate the challenges they experience. This project was thus initially conceived to hear their voices and validate their experiences which, having lived in Berlin, Copenhagen and Montreal for extended periods of time, I felt capable of accomplishing on an international scale.

A qualitative study of Western Muslims however challenged me to address basic presumptions of my own Western Muslim identity. As a male born to a middleclass Egyptian family in Montreal, and then raised in Berlin, participants' interviews quickly exposed how facets of my educational background and social class played an integral role in how I perceived myself as a Western Muslim. This experience was elucidating both on an individual basis as well as a researcher, and inspired me to challenge the basic beliefs and presumptions I have with regards to the Western Muslim community. Thus, I encouraged myself to hold the participant interviews in a manner which validates the intersubjective space between research-participant based on my training in psychotherapy (Buirski & Haglund, 2009). This has the following two implications. First, it necessitates that I introspect and then admit, rather than deny, my own subjectivities involved in the intersubjective space with my participants. Second, it inspires an empathetic position in which empathy is not defined as 'putting yourself in the others shoes' as is understood colloquially, but rather 'witnessing the experiences of the other in their own shoes.' This latter point underlines the impossibility of ever fully appreciating the experiences of another individual, but nonetheless affirms our capacity to relate our feelings and experiences within the co-constituted intersubjective space.

My position as a Western Muslim, and thus an 'insider' in the community, has advantages and disadvantages beyond the subjectivity of my own experiences (Ahluwalia & Mattis, 2012). As a Muslim male adult, both my religious affiliation as well as my gender may impact the content and style of the participants' narratives.

The former, the shared religious identity between interviewer/interviewee, may be considered both an opportunity as well as a hindrance within the intersubjective space. The benefit arises in the fact that the participants may be far more open to share their grievances of their respective country with another Muslim than with a non-Muslim. The hindrance may be that Muslim participants may be less likely to disclose conflicts with their religious identity, in order to avoid the stigma associated with appearing deficient in faith. Our analysis did not detect any biased responses with regards to this however, and in fact many of our participants expressed gratitude in having a forum for sharing their thoughts - even when it came to disclosing their difficulties with the Muslim identity. The second element has to do with gender. While a female Muslim research assistant was present in the interviews featuring female participants, it may have still have been awkward for some to share the full range of their experiences with myself present; Islam can be understood to stipulate a degree of modesty between genders. In light of the rich narratives our female participants provided, we presume this was most likely not the case, however it remains a limitation nonetheless.

1.7. Presentation of the five articles

Articles 1, 2 and 3 explore how the socio-political environments of Western Muslims affect their religious and national identity development. Article 1 explores the development of religious and national identities comparatively across political contexts. It addresses the following research question: how do Muslim young adults differ in their religious and national identity development across political contexts? Taking a constructivist position towards the narratives of Western Muslim young adults, we identify two themes central to national identity: citizenship and civic engagement. Civic engagement, in specific, appears to be uniquely determined by both national and religious identity perceptions. We discuss the importance of

contextualizing expressions of national identity according to political context. Article 2 explores the process by which Muslim young adults develop their religious identities, from one of parental heritage to one of personal choice. It addresses the following research question: how do national and religious identities develop in light of increasing islamophobia? This article reviews how some participants developed a significant anti-ethnic attitude towards the Muslim identity of their parents in their adolescence, deferring their religious development to that of peers and other sources. Underlying this process is a need to develop a perceived objective Muslim identity. We extrapolate how some Western Muslim youth require this objective Muslim identity to counter increasing islamophobia, and develop a sense of certainty amidst intra-religious ethnic divisions. Article 3 looks at the changes that occur in the social identity configuration of converts upon acceptance of the Muslim faith. It addresses the following research questions: how does the political context impact the social identity development of Muslim converts? It explores the narratives of Muslim converts who experienced conflicts between their national and ethnic identities prior to conversion. These conflicts were resolved however upon acceptance of the Muslim identity. We finalize by extrapolating several implications of the results. The pretense for this pro-national identity transformation appears to be similar to the social identity narrative of Muslim-born participants: the need to defend Islam in public discourse.

Articles 4 and 5 explore how Western Muslims develop their multiple social identities simultaneously. Article 4 explores the life narrative of Western Muslims, investigating how they develop multiple social identities as a function of personal experiences. It addresses the following research question: how do second-generation Muslims negotiate their multiple social identities in light of their unique life course trajectories? Taking a constructivist position towards the theoretical foundations of the bicultural identity and acculturation models, this chapter focuses on two major themes underlying second-generation identity development: the precedence of

experience to social identities and the enmeshment of multiple social identities. It concludes by outlining the challenge embedded in social identity theory, which at once denotes both group membership as well as political categorization. Article 5 proposes a novel approach to multiple social identity development of individuals, in an attempt to overcome the political reification of social identity categories. It addresses the following research question: how does one conceive of a Western Muslim young adult possessing several multiples social identities outside the bicultural and acculturation theory frameworks? We offer the conceptual framework of social representations as a means of understanding social identity development, which is established upon notions of shared, commonsensical knowledge as foundational to notions of cultures and groups. It concludes by suggesting that Western Muslims do not necessarily hold separate national and religious identities per se, but rather their understanding of the world is necessarily a reflection of being Muslim embedded within a Western space. The division between social identities then is likely a political artifact imposed upon their self-concept.

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CHAPITRE II

ARTICLE I

Contextualising Article 1

This first article exposes the reader to the different formulations of Muslim identity according to country, introducing therefore the significance of the socio-political context in the perception and embodiment of social identities. It addresses the fundamental question: are Muslim identities experienced differently across socio-political contexts? And if so, how? Furthermore, it explores if these differences are at all experientially related to perceptions of the national identity. This article thus looks at how the subjective experience of the socio-political context will translate directly into the national identity formulation of the individual, expecting then the development of the Muslim identity to change accordingly. By directly addressing the impact of the socio-political context on identity development, this article sparks the thought process which will eventually develop into a conceptualization of how social identities are related in articles 4 and 5.

Title

Comparing national identity development of Western Muslims: Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen

Abstract

Little is known about how Western Muslims develop their national identities across nation-states exhibiting increasing islamophobia in political discourse. This article explores how Muslim young adults in Copenhagen, Montreal and Berlin perceive and express their national identity according to their unique political climates. Thirty Muslim young adults were interviewed to discuss the experiential development of their social identities. We identify two main themes central to national identity: citizenship and civic engagement. The expression of these themes differs according to the socio-political characteristics of each country. In Canada, participants related citizenship as inherent to their national identity, describing civic engagement as an obligation. In Germany and Denmark, citizenship reflects ambivalence towards their national identity based on an uncertain relationship with the state. Civic engagement is then portrayed as a means of defending Islam in the public arena. We discuss the importance of contextualizing expressions of national identity.

Keywords

Muslims; national identity; citizenship; civic engagement; marginalisation; religious identity

Introduction

Western Muslims are becoming one of the largest religious minority groups in Europe (Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Grim & Karim, 2011). Since 9/11, Western nations have progressively implemented policies singling out Muslims, thereby ‘otherising’ them in public discourse (Afshar, 2013; Raz, 2006). Furthermore, domestic terror attacks coupled with the solicitation to join the fighting in the Middle East has generated national concerns over Western Muslims’ allegiance to their country (Coppock & McGovern, 2014; Laurence, 2011). The right wing political discourse in the era of the war on terror questions the compatibility of Islam and Western values, painting the two as polar opposites (Kundnani, 2007; Vertovec, 2002). Countries such as the UK have implemented policies to catch and remedy potential psychological vulnerabilities, which they suspect, may lead young Muslims to the path of radicalisation (Coppock & McGovern, 2014; Summerfield, 2016). The emotional rhetoric, discrimination and negative stereotyping targeting Muslims in Western discourse have provoked feelings of isolation, social exclusion, alienation and marginalization (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Ewing & Hoyler, 2008; Zaal, Salah, & Fine, 2007). The current socio-political context thus raises questions of identity and belongingness for many Western Muslims, who are increasingly portrayed as a threat to the security and values of Western societies. Identity negotiations and civic integration play essential roles in illustrating the challenges, and uncovering potential vulnerabilities, within national identity development. As such, questions of identity and acculturation makes up a significant portion of social psychological research conducted on Muslims in Western societies (Amer & Bagasra, 2013). In social psychology, group affiliations formulate social identities within a person’s self-concept, creating a sense of belonging based on a shared commonality (Jenkins, 2014; Henri Tajfel, 1981; H. Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Commonalities can be characterized by religion, ethnicity and nationality, which serve as the foundations of religious, ethnic and national identities respectively.

(Hendry, Mayer, & Kloep, 2007; Jenkins, 2014). In this sense, a national identity relates to the experiential affiliation to the nation-state, and not to any overt political formulations of citizenship – although this certainly plays a role, as will be discussed later.

Despite the increased interest in Western Muslims, publications on Western Muslim identity development are lacking and the research methodologies of those published vary widely (S. R. Sirin & Balsano, 2007). Specifically, little is known how Western Muslims negotiate their religious and national identities in Western contexts (Thomas & Sanderson, 2011). The Muslim social identity is often depicted in psychology as an ethnic identity related to one's ethnic heritage vis-à-vis the mainstream identity within a framework of acculturation. As such, the two most common theoretical frameworks employed with Western Muslims in social psychology are the acculturation and bicultural identity models (e.g. Britto & Amer, 2007; S. Sirin & Fine, 2007; Stubbs & Sallee, 2013; Zaal et al., 2007). However, as Younis & Hassan (in press) have recently suggested, bicultural and acculturation models are incompatible with the national and religious identity experiences of Western-born Muslims. They argue these models were originally developed for migrants, and not their descendants; the models lack clarity in defining what a 'Muslim' is, thereby confounding ethnicity, cultural and religion; and they dismiss how social identities may reflect political categorization rather than discreet psychological phenomena. Furthermore, the authors argue that the separation of social identities may also be a political artifact imposed upon the self-concept of Western Muslims (Younis & Hassan, in press) when in fact social identities are essentially co-constructed in an indivisible manner. These concerns demand novel methods in approaching the identity development of Western Muslims, beyond the binary scopes of acculturation and bicultural identity models. Thus, our research foregoes the application of the acculturation and bicultural models in favor of giving Western Muslim young adults their own voice in relating the development and

negotiation of their national and religious identities. To do this, we employ a contextualized approach, which considers how Muslims give meaning to their social identities according to their socio-political contexts, while negotiating their religious and national identities simultaneously. Rather than deliberating over social identity negotiations as a purely intra-psychic endeavour, we view the relationship between a Muslim's religious identity and national identities as a product of social and political forces (Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002; Meer, 2008).

Few studies compare multiple political sites in the development of national and religious identities of Western Muslims. The novelty of our research is that it begins with the assumption that differing political developments of citizenship across countries will impact the national identity of Western Muslims, which informs their religious identity development accordingly. Western Muslims' experiences of citizenship were compared across Copenhagen, Montreal and Berlin. These field sites were chosen for several reasons: the three cities are known for their substantial Muslim minority population; Muslims are often the objects of political debate in Quebec, Denmark and Germany; and finally, the primary author is well-immersed in the three communities, facilitating the recruitment process. This article poses the following question: how do Muslim young adults in Copenhagen, Montreal and Berlin perceive and express their national identity according to their unique political climates? The importance of contextualizing expressions of national identity will be discussed, advocating a more nuanced emphasis on the social and political environments of Western Muslims.

Citizenship across political contexts

Experiences of national identity are intimately linked to socio-historic formulations of citizenship. Brubaker (1992) famously reviewed how notions of citizenship waver according to divergent formulations of nationhood in his comparison of France and Germany. These countries, Brubaker (1992) argues, had diverging political interests in how expansive citizenship they were willing to allow. For Germany, this led to a formulation of citizenship that favored ethnic Germans to the exclusion of non-German immigrants, including descendants. This governmental attitude in the 1960s produced a precedent in which several generations following the initial migration of Turkish migrant workers were denied citizenship and thus, symbolically, a ‘right to belong.’ Considering that German residents receive the same benefits as citizens – and Germany does not allow dual citizenship - the policy changes later allowing the acquisition of citizenship status around the turn of the 21st century did not provide enough incentive for Turkish descendants to forfeit their Turkish passport (Bauder, 2008; Brubaker, 1992). As a result, Bauder (2008) argues German minorities are often in a disadvantaged position regarding the cultural capital that is associated with citizenship in society.

Indicative of its political attitude towards cultural minorities, Denmark, like Germany, has been historically more restrictive in according citizenship status to migrants in comparison to other EU states (Howard, 2005). Muslims in particular have been a decisive element in the government’s policy changes ever since 2002, with citizenship restrictions being applied to this minority population’s migration flow and naturalization process (Kofman, 2005). The objective of these policies was to ultimately protect the sanctity of Danish values from the accelerated growth of Muslims whose values are considered antithetical to liberal Western democracies. Both Germany and Denmark do not recognize Islam as a religion protected by the constitution (Savage, 2004). In turn, second and third-generation Muslims in Western Europe are now more likely than previous generations to resist conforming to the

cultural norms of society, for fear of losing their Muslim identity in the process, despite facilitated citizenship processes (Savage, 2004).

Canada on the other hand, a country whose growth and economy has depended primarily on migrants, is more liberal than Germany in the issuing of citizenship status; it offers migrants a naturalization process while designating descendants as *bona fide* Canadian citizens (Bauder, 2008). Although our research took place in Quebec, immigrants in this province generally feel a sense of belonging to Canada first and foremost, positioning themselves in opposition to Quebec's independence as a result (Kymlicka, 2011). Canada thus differs enormously from both Germany and Denmark in the formal designation of citizenship among its migrant communities. Both Germany and Canada however demonstrate various challenges in the *informal citizenship* of its minority populations, which denotes the social recognition of migrants as national compatriots beyond paperwork. This distinction also relates to two of the Western definitions of citizenship: legal status and sense of belonging (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). Bauder (2008) here suggests the importance of race, in which non-White populations can be socially and economically disadvantaged irrespective of their citizenship status. The divide between formal (civic) and informal (ethnocentric) citizenship is flimsy however; some Western countries which facilitate the naturalization of migrant descendants as a birth right, such as the Netherlands, still demand that Muslims acclimate their belief system to that of majority society (Bloemraad et al., 2008; Joppke, 2003). This brief history of the three nation-states depicts the idiosyncratic elements of nationhood and citizenship, setting the stage for how our Western Muslim participants developed discrepant understandings of their national identities.

Methodology

Thirty Muslim young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five participated in our study; ten from Montreal, Copenhagen and Berlin respectively, with a total of fifteen men and fifteen women. Participants were recruited via flyers posted within Muslim organizations such as mosques and Muslim Student Associations, as well as social media. Participants also solicited friends and acquaintances to join the study afterwards via the snowball method. The settings varied widely between homes, university classrooms and mosque conference rooms. The first author speaks fluent English, German and French, and was the main interviewer in Montreal and Berlin. A Danish-English translator was present at the request of several participants in Denmark who were less comfortable to conduct the interview in English.

Interviews lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended as per the qualitative nature of the research. We promoted a non-threatening, two-way dialogue to solicit an organic narrative detailing the participants understanding of their social identities. References to Muslim and national identities were kept intentionally broad, as to incite the participants to provide their own definitions and experiences. An interview guide, validated by the ethics committee, ensured the discussions remained centered on identity. Interviews always began with the open-ended question ‘What is your identity?’, and then proceeded to unravel the different social identities evoked in the dialogue. Each social identity was then allocated some time to explore how the participant understands and developed this identity according to their own personal narrative. Interviews were transcribed ad verbatim, then examined and coded for individual themes. We used thematic content analysis to examine the interviews, which unearths patterns within the data to reveal its richness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, we explored for themes pertinent to the research question of how Western Muslim young adults develop their social identities according to their political contexts. As such, we highlighted all elements of an interview relating to the national identity,

distinguishing between German, Danish and Canadian participants. We then developed a mind map connecting all the sub-themes relating to a national identity. This helped unravel the reoccurring narrative elements associated with each national context to compare attitudes across countries. At the same time, we allowed for the natural manifestation of themes to unravel, unrelated to the research objectives.

Several considerations must be discussed regarding the outcome of our recruitment process. The most significant element, which explains why this article relates primarily to Canada rather than Quebec, is a function of our Montreal cohort: nine of our ten participants there were Anglophone. In addition, when asked if they refer to Canada or Quebec when discussion national or civic identities, these nine Montreal participants specifically underlined Canada. This distinction between Canada and Quebec outlines the political undercurrents of language in Quebec society, which historically emphasized French as an essential quality of its political landscape. Quebec also differs from Canada in terms of its representation of Muslims in public discourse. Quebec - with its less favourable attitude towards multiculturalism - is more antagonistic towards Muslims as compared to other Canadian provinces (Bakali, 2015). Unsurprisingly, our nine Anglophone Quebec-born Muslim participants, most likely enacting their political agency as a form of protest towards a province that has recently undergone the Quebec charter controversy, described a belonging to Canada rather than Quebec. Special attention must thus be devoted to the political underpinning of the word ‘national’ among Montreal participants. However, as we only recruited a single Francophone participant, we decided it was best to not address the deep Quebec/Canada political divide vis-à-vis the Muslim population in this text, though it is nonetheless important. We will relate primarily to Canada when discussing the national identity of our Montreal cohort - as it is more representative of their narratives - but we will nonetheless address the Quebec context as it is the environment in which they were raised.

Another consideration is the difference in recruitment: participants in Germany and Canada were mostly recruited via flyers in mosques and Muslim organizations, while Danish participants were principally found with the snowball method. The difference may be significant; Jeldtoft (2011) distinguishes between public and private religiosities, in that participants found within mosques and Muslim associations may be more representative of organizational commitment and formal religious practice. However, this did not appear to be the case in our results; the narratives of non-organized Muslim Danes did not differ significantly from Canadians or Germans in terms of citizenship, according to recruitment process. Furthermore,

A final note must be added to Muslim converts considering the number (10) participating in our study. The inclusion of converts if a result of our recruitment criteria: the self-identification of ‘Muslim’ and having been born in a Western country. Western Muslim converts find themselves at a critical juncture representing a ‘Western Islam’ which challenges majority ethnocentric narratives of national identity; providing a counter-narrative to the racialization of Islam embedded within prevalent xenophobic discourse; and challenging the traditional ethnocentric interpretations of Islam that immigrants bring in Western lands (Özyürek, 2014; Rogozen-Soltar, 2012). Significantly, conversion to Islam can be understood as a form of social commentary by challenging prevalent formulations of national identity and citizenship (Viswanathan, 1998). Özyürek (2014) found that conversion to Islam deconstructs pre-defined social and political constructions of being German. This arises from a deep desire to change society’s views of Islam and Muslims, in light of increasing islamophobia (Roald, 2004). As such, political contexts also play an integral role in the social identity development of Muslim converts.

Citizenship: a common thread

All participants emphasized the significance of citizenship as a primary descriptor of their national identity. Their narratives detailed how being born in a country, in addition to ingesting its language and idioms, harbors a reality for Muslim young adults which unequivocally defines their national affiliation. Omar, born to Pakistani parents in Berlin, relates the following when asked how he identifies himself: '*I always say Muslim first, then human, then Pakistani-Indian-German. That's when citizenship comes in.*' For Omar, citizenship plays an integral role in his German identity, as differentiated by his religious affiliation and ethnic origins. Alexander, a convert from Berlin, shares similar thoughts:

Alexander: I don't think in national schemas, I'm proud that I grew up in Germany and I know I'm German because I have a German passport, but as a person I would never say that I'm German or that I'm Greek. It's difficult for me to describe this in words but it plays a very small role in my life, in the way I think.

While Alexander dismisses the significance of his German identity, he ultimately concedes to the role his German passport plays as the fundament of his national identity. Erkan, born to Turkish parents in Denmark, echoes Alexander's thoughts: '*No, the Danish [identity] is important as well, I don't know when it's there, but it's there. [...] I'm Danish on paper. There's not that much Danish about me. I don't know.*' There's a defining feature of the Danish identity, Erkan argues, despite his inability to explain what exactly it is. He finally realizes it must be his citizenship.

Canadians were no different than German and Danish Muslims in emphasizing the paperwork underlying their national identity. When asked what it means to be Canadian, Rodrigo, a convert, says '*it's documentation to be honest with you. For you to be Canadian, all you need is documentation, because there is no kind of like, it's so diverse, it's from extremes to extremes.*' The symbolic value of the passport as fundamental to the national identity is significant. Andreouli and Howarth (2013) argue the passport reflects 'a type of social recognition as it marked a positioning

shift from an unwanted migrant to a welcomed traveller.' For British Muslims, Basit (2009) found that the passport was frequently cited as a reason why they feel British. Similarly, the Muslim participants we interviewed openly declared their citizenship – often underlining the passport - as the most basic building block of their national identity. Beyond the surface however, Canadian Muslims differed implicitly in their relationship to citizenship to their German and Danish counterparts which, as will be described later, has significant implications on their religious identity development.

Canada: Commitment to values

Canadian participants related citizenship as inherent to their national identity, and a product of the country's multicultural history. These young adults argue that Canada is a cultural vacuum which allows the freedom of choice and self-expression, and where cultural groups are welcome to choose their values and lifestyle as they please. Asma, born in Montreal to a Pakistani family, relates to this freedom as follows:

Asma: Well I think... From my understanding... Being Canadian deals with,, diversity, I think. It's given me the sense of freedom... It's a lot more diversified, and you're not limited, when dealing with Pakistani culture you're limited to four walls, but being Canadian gives you liberty to practice Islam a lot more than within Pakistani culture.

Asma contrasts Canada's openness with Pakistani culture to showcase her Canadian identity's sense of freedom. Her thoughts echo Younis and Hassan's (in press) reflections, relating how multicultural identities are in fact co-constituted, and the perception of one social identity mutually impacts the perception of other social identities. Alexis, a Greek convert from Montreal, shares similar thoughts: '*Canada has a lot of cultures, and I was born here... I belong here because Canada sees itself as so multicultural, I don't feel like we all distinguish ourselves from being*

Canadians.' Alexis' account is especially fascinating in light of her difficulties defining the Greek identity earlier in her interview. Yet, despite her difficulties in defining both her Canadian and Greek identities, she remains far more attached to her ethnic heritage than the land she was raised in. For Alexis, Canada lacks a fundamental national identity precisely because of its multicultural nature. She later relates that the more a country increases in diversity, the less one is able to construct an identity off it. While the Greek identity is difficult to define, she argues, it remains virtually clear and present. Mark, also a Montreal convert, reiterates his thoughts in other words:

Mark: Yeah I think it's mostly in terms of citizenship. I don't know, if you live in Canada, and it's your primary residence, you're Canadian. I think there are certain values, like let's say multiculturalism, especially nowadays, it's a very Canadian value. But I don't think supporting multiculturalism makes you Canadian, I just think it's a Canadian value. But if you don't support it, and you live here, you're still Canadian.

Like the others, Mark depicts the Canadian identity as a shell, underlining a substantial element in his narrative: irrespective of one's agreement with Canadian values, one remains Canadian. This reflects the historic development of *formal* Canadian citizenship as described earlier, which is fundamentally established on a liberal naturalization process of all minorities. This attitude diverges strongly from the attitudes of the German and Danish Muslims when it comes to conflicting values.

Germany and Denmark: A battle of belonging

German and Danish Muslims also emphasized citizenship as integral to their national identity. However, in contrast to the Canadian Muslims, the emphasis on citizenship here reflects an uncertain relationship with the nation-state, as if all other ostensible

indications of national affiliation are questionable. These young adults often described their German and Danish homes as historically dismissive of the Muslim minority presence (as per their citizenship discourse), exacerbated by two contemporary issues: a media discourse which actively questions the Muslim presence and a political emphasis on national values which contradict Islam. The two are mutually constitutive; with the media often depicting how Islam is incompatible with national values, Germans and Danish Muslims develop a more negative attitude towards the values of their national cohorts. The result is the realization that one can never fully become a ‘Dane’ or ‘German’, developing in turn an ambivalent relationship with the national identity in which one is, but at the same time never will be, a complete citizen. These young adults thus relate how they fall back unto citizenship as either a form of documentation, arguing there is little else to prove their national affiliation. However, its formal meaning lacks the sense of belongingness found among Canadian Muslims. Thus, while Canadian Muslims emphasized their national identity’s *potential* to enact their Muslim identity, German and Danish Muslims disclosed an uncertainty towards the national identity vis-à-vis their religious identity. Omar, who strongly identifies with the Muslim identity in terms of prosocial values, describes his national identity in the following manner:

Omar: *Well, yeah, me personally, I wouldn’t say because I’m brown I’m Pakistani. But if I were to say I were German in a circle of Germans, they would look at me and say, “where do you come from really?” They wouldn’t accept me as a German right away. Same thing in Pakistan; when I go there and speak Pakistani, then they notice right away that I’m not from there, he’s not a real Pakistani because he’s not fluent in his Urdu. That’s why I don’t say I’m completely German, nor completely Pakistani – something in-between. I’m not alone in that line of thinking; many think like that.*

Omar’s ambivalence towards both his national and ethnic identities, and his expression of being ‘something in-between’, is the result of others regularly

questioning his affiliation. Other participants such as Salam, who was born in Berlin to Syrian parents, were less descriptive, but no less blunt. When asked about her German national identity, Salam responded with uncertainty: '*I don't know how to identify myself with that... Somehow, I belong to Germany, but I can't identify myself with them.*' Salam's ambivalence is clear. While it is possible to strike a parallel between her and Alexis, the Canadian convert, in their inability to fully relate to the national identity, a deeper analysis reveals a significant difference. For Alexis, the Canadian identity represented an emptiness which she was unable to relate to. Salam, on the other hand, has a slightly negative attitude towards Germany: '*One knows the German as disciplined, punctual... how can I describe what a German is? I would even say, every German is... I would even describe the German as greedy. It's really a characteristic of them. Every German is like that.*' This is not to say that her ambivalence is a denial of her German identity. When relating to how her Muslim and German identities intersect, she responds:

Salam: I would even connect them. When I read the Quran, where it says be respectful of others, then I'm fulfilling not only the Islamic side, but the German and Arab side as well. I'm fulfilling all requirements with Islam. That's why I think it's always best to refer to the Muslim identity.

Salam thus relates to the German identity with the same ambivalence as Omar and his feelings of 'in-betweeness'. Shaimaa, a Berliner born to Palestinian parents, highlights the significance of citizenship as a final recourse towards national affiliation:

Interviewer: Wouldn't that make someone who is born in Berlin, a German?

Shaimaa: Yes, that would make him German, but when you say you're a Berliner, it's like, if I was in Munich, I don't feel good there, I don't feel as accepted as I do here in Berlin. That's why I don't feel German, I don't feel like I belong everywhere in

Germany, because that would mean I would feel good everywhere in Germany, which is not the case, which is why I say I'm a Berliner, because it's my home. Of course, I was born in Germany, and if anybody asks me for my nationality, I would say German because it says that in the passport. But the way I feel, I say I'm a Berliner.

Shaimaa's association to Berlin, rather than Germany, is also an implicit rejection of her national identification; enacting her political agency to exhibit discord with the nation-state, while affirming her Berlin roots. No other participants (across the three countries) offered such sentiments. Indeed, Shaimaa's attitude developed as a result of her experiences in German townships which lack the diversity she finds in Berlin.

In Denmark, Anas relates how the 'new Dane' (*nydansker*) developed as a reformulation of the national identity within a political climate which regularly questions a minority's affiliation to the state. When asked to define the new Dane, Anas responds: "*If you go to a Danish context and asked everybody to give you a specific answer: it is someone who has Danish citizenship but who is not ethnically Danish.*" Implicit in Anas' understanding of the Danish identity is the definition of what a Dane should be, namely white (e.g. having German and Danish features). Anas instead preserves his affiliation to his national identity by challenging this social formulation of being Danish. Sakina, born to Pakistani parents in Denmark, echoes Anas' sentiments of social marginalization. When asked how she experiences her Danish identity, she relates the following:

Sakina: *For me it works fine. Sometimes you meet people, it's very common here in Denmark, that some Danes who are not Muslim meet you and they're like "oh you're not like other Muslims here". Very typical. And then it's like "well how did you perceive the Muslims before?" It's because of the media, they had a wrong perception. That's always an issue that makes it a lot more difficult for Muslims being here in Denmark I think. [...] But still I feel [that] Danes [...] make big issues*

of everything, especially those who have the power, and they make it difficult for the Muslims. But as such I believe it's fine, you can fully work in the community, you shouldn't have any issues getting along with other people. If some people are nagging you, or making your life more miserable, you can always find a solution.

Sakina is especially hopeful given the context she is describing. For her, social marginalisation is a given, and so it cannot be expected that Danes would ever fully accept Muslims – a reality one just has to deal with. She remains a Dane by virtue of civic engagement however, which will be explored comprehensively in the next section.

Other participants shared similar feelings of ambivalence, emphasizing the conflicting sets of values instead. Waqas, born to a Pakistani family in a township outside of Copenhagen, narrates the following when asked to describe his Danish identity:

Waqas: Being a Dane, for instance when I go outside [...], I speak the language, I have Danish friends, I go to Danish school, I have a Danish job... That's why I think I am Danish. Do I feel Danish? ... Maybe I don't feel Danish at all... I think if I would feel Danish, I would be drinking alcohol and eating hotdogs. I think I am Danish, but not feeling it.

By reflecting on the contradicting values of his Muslim and Danish identities, Waqas is challenged with the quandary of relating to his national identity. On the one hand, it seems obvious to Waqas that his upbringing in Denmark – speaking Danish, attending a Danish school, etc. – bears the hallmarks of an individual who must necessarily be Danish. This is not how he feels however; Danish habits, he argues, prove to be ostensibly inconsistent with Islamic values. Implicit in this confusion, Waqas relates, is the predetermined script how one ought to feel Danish, which he perceives to be incompatible with Islam. This definition of ‘how to feel Danish’

reflects Denmark's wider narrative of Islam's unsuitability with national values. As such, being Danish, but not feeling it, summarizes the sort of ambivalence Waqas and other German and Danish Muslims are experiencing. Such rhetoric was virtually absent among Canadian participants, yet reflective of German Muslims sensibilities.

Discussion

The religious identity is inextricably linked to the dynamic interpolations of citizenship. German and Danish Muslims are pessimistic that Muslims will ever attain total social and political acceptance. These feelings are not arbitrary; as discussed previously, German and Danish naturalisation policies have historically been stricter than Canada for migrants and descendants until the turn of the 21st century. As such, how they describe the realization of their religious identity is overtly defensive. Their description of *dawah* (the act relating to inviting others to Islam in word and action) is not merely *proactive* in the rhetorical understanding of 'inviting others', but significantly *reactive* in light of their political environment. On the other hand, Canadian Muslims' understanding of *dawah* coalesced with the political identity of being Canadian, much more so than their Danish and German counterparts. This coincides with Canada's policies regarding migrants and descendants, who experienced a facilitated naturalization process towards the acquisition of citizenship. Canadian Muslim communities thus faced relatively fewer hindrances in the *formal* political acknowledgement of their presence as fellow Canadians. A Canadian identity, as many participants described, is essentially a reformulation of their Muslim identity in a Canadian context; both identities stipulate this concerted effort to benefit society.

One must not forget however that our Montreal participants were born and raised in Quebec, a province whose public is considerably more antagonistic towards Muslims

(Bakali, 2015). Indeed, experience of discrimination among Quebec Muslims is known to have increased significantly post-9/11 (Rousseau, Hassan, Moreau & Thombs, 2011). Furthermore, Quebec's interculturalism approach (versus Canada's multiculturalism) and its various public controversies surrounding Muslims - such reasonable accommodations debates and the Quebec charter of values - highlights the *informal* discrepancies of Quebec citizenship which differ from the rest of Canada. As such, though all Canadian Muslims share the same passport, the document differs in the sense of belongingness it affords according to province. Indeed, islamophobia in Quebec public discourse is more pronounced than other Canadian provinces (Bakali, 2015). This reflects how islamophobia can be conceived a process which seeks to contain the political agency of a growing Muslim community (Sayyid and Vakil, 2010). Anglophone Quebec Muslims, in turn, re-enact their political agency by superseding Quebec's authority and relating directly to Canada. As such, the idiosyncrasies of Quebec vis-à-vis Canada are integral in any discussion on the formal and informal elements of citizenship.

The religious identity is thus intimately related to the development of the national identity, which in turn is informed by both historical (regarding processes of citizenship) and contemporary (regarding the compatibility of Islam in Western contexts) socio-political discourses surrounding Muslims. Similarly, Gest (2015) found there is a strong need to be perceived as British among British Muslim, whereas Spaniards had a substantially more resigned attitude towards their *informal* recognition as nationals. Gest (2015) suggests the differences between Spanish and British Muslims is a result of diverging formulations of citizenship and national identity development - similarly to the outcome of our research. These observations lend themselves as an argument for qualitative, ethnographic study of Western Muslims that uncovers the complexity of meanings underlying citizenship which inform religious and national identity development. Such an approach reflects the social contingency of identities which are 'not free of external pressures,

objectification and racialization' (Meer, 2008), and questions the bicultural and acculturation models often employed in social psychological research on Western Muslims.

A distinction must be made between converts and second-generation Western Muslims descendants, though the subject of converts will be discussed more fully in chapter 4. Converts, whose families for the most part did not experience the same historic challenges with the acquisition of citizenship, feel particularly responsible for demonstrating the compatibility between their religious and national identities (Oestergaard, 2009). Özyürek's (2014) offers that German converts contest normative representations of 'Germaness' in their acts of conversion. As such, it is important to contextualize their conversion within the socio-political dimensions of the Western Muslim identity. As we see with our convert participants in Germany and Denmark, the Muslim identity is implicitly understood as disassociated with their respective nation-states, which they then inherit upon conversion and employ as a political maneuver to challenge ethnocentric formulations of citizenship (such was the case in German citizenship history). In this sense, both religious and national identities are linked to notions of citizenship and race (Rogozen & Soltar, 2012); conversion can thus be understood as a form of protest towards normative understandings of race as central to both Muslim and national identities (Özyürek, 2014; Viswanathan, 1998). While implications of race differ for Muslim converts across political contexts (Galonnier, 2015), our participants in all three cities asserted their religious and national identities in a manner which affirms their compatibility, not only for the sake of defending Islam, but to affirm their position towards other Germans as compatriots.

Finally, gender also played a significant role in the discussion of Western Muslim national identity (Maslim & Bjorck, 2009). There is an interesting juxtaposition between the fact that Muslim women often get the brunt of Islamophobic policies

(Allen & Nielsen, 2002; Navarro, 2010), and the reality that women are more likely than men to convert to Islam (Rehman & Dziegielewski, 2003). Furthermore, Islamic values are perceived to be antithetical to liberal, feminist values found in Western societies, further amplifying the irony of their conversion rate (Ali, Mahmood, Moel, Hudson, & Leathers, 2008). Both our Muslim-born and convert female participants related the polemics of experiencing gender-specific discrimination, showcasing the special challenges female Muslims encounter in their social environments. For them, the predominant narratives of false consciousness – that Western Muslim women are culturally oppressed into denying their subjugation – establish a significant gender-specific battleground to provide a counter-narrative that showcases both their agency and liberty (Bilge, 2010).

Limitations

There are limitations to both the process and extrapolations of this research. First, most participants in Berlin were recruited from three major Sunni mosques; in contrast to Copenhagen and Montreal, where participants were recruited primarily with the snowball method. The distinction is significant for two reasons. There is thus the possibility our Berlin participants' discourse reflects the organizational sentiments of their respective mosques, whereas Montreal and Copenhagen participants did not display any overt organizational commitment during recruitment. Second, the snowball method may implicitly produce a network of participants (based on friends, acquaintances) who share similar attitudes regarding their national and religious identities. As such, there is an underrepresentation of other religious sub-groups (i.e. Shia) or class diversity among our Muslim participants. It would have been unfeasible to remedy these shortcomings with a larger cohort, in light of the number of participants recruited from each city, which were only ten. This

number was stipulated as a function of the limited time devoted to each field site, as well as the depth of information dedicated to each participant's narrative.

Conclusion

Western Muslims are increasingly developing their identity in response to negative representation of Islam in Western media and public discourse. However, as we have reviewed in this article, their development intimately related to perceptions of national identity informed by socio-political elements historically enacted upon migrant communities, such as those regarding citizenship. The distinct ways of understanding national identity, and its resulting impact on religious identity development, underscores the need of taking individual narratives into consideration. On paper, Canadian, Danish and German Muslims emphasized citizenship as a principal signifier of their national identity. However, as demonstrated, the understanding of citizenship differed in accordance to the political environments. This observation cautions from generalizing the significance of citizenship via *a priori* theoretical frameworks across Western Muslim populations. In turn, our results also beg to question the measures which employ simplistic binary formats of social identities in their research methodology, especially in social psychology. Considering the increased political focus on radicalisation of Western Muslims, research should instead strive to unravel the intricacies of how individuals situate themselves and develop their identities across their unique socio-political environments. As such, the value of our research is established on its ability to shed light on how Muslim young adults understand and express their national identities differently, by comparing their experiences across Western contexts. Prospective research should especially consider the Quebec/Canada divide when exploring

Muslim Quebecers' experiences of the national identity, as the identity politics of the province vis-à-vis the country can be quite different. Furthermore, research would benefit from investigating the dissonance of Danish and German Muslims who encourage civic engagement, yet remain cynical whether it would improve their social status. Young Western Muslims are in a vulnerable position today; they live in environments which explicitly question their allegiance to the state, and have grown accustomed to arguing their rights for fair treatment. By exploring the dynamics of how Western Muslims experience their social environments and develop their identities accordingly, we begin to appreciate the effects historical and contemporary policies have on these young adults.

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CHAPITRE III

ARTICLE II

Contextualising Article 2

In light of the results of the previous article, which explored how religious identities of Western Muslims differ according to varying perceptions of citizenship, the question is raised what mediates this development within the social environment. This second article addresses how Western Muslims construct their religious identities as a function of their family and peer relationships, while keeping in consideration the political contexts outlined in the article 1. We not only observe in this article how the political context establishes the foundation for Muslim identity development, but begin unraveling how it demands Muslim youth to adopt an attitude of religious objectivity to counter prevalent islamophobic discourse. This then translates into Muslim youth taking a decidedly anti-ethnic position towards the religious formulation of their parents, which deem as culturally informed and therefore subjective. Instead, Muslim young adults harken greater significance to their peers in formation of their religious identity, who are perceived as more reliable religious authorities, and thus provide a stronger foundation in challenging social discourse.

Title

“I know what a Muslim really is”: The perceived need for an objective religious identity among Western Muslim young adults

Abstract

This article explores the process by which Western Muslim young adults develop their religious identity in light of increasing negative discourse surrounding Islam in the media. We interviewed 20 Western Muslim young adults from Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen within an age range of 18 to 25, exploring their social identity development in light of contemporary discussions on the need for religious objectivity. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Thematic content analysis was used to explore theme patterns in the narratives. Some of our participants indicated a significant anti-ethnic attitude towards the Muslim identity of their parents, deferring their religious development to that of peers and other sources. Underlying this process was a significant need to develop a perceived objective Muslim identity. We extrapolate how Western Muslim youth develop a need for an objective Muslim identity as a function of Westernisation, as well as to counter increasing islamophobia in socio-political discourse.

Keywords

Western Muslims; social identity development; religious identity; islamophobia; objectivity

Introduction

The population of Western Muslims is increasing rapidly, expected to grow by almost one-third in Europe over the next 20 years (Grim & Karim, 2011). A significant portion of this population consists of a growing number of migrant descendants (Grim & Karim, 2011). Adolescence is a significant developmental period when social identities are negotiated and solidified. Little is known however how Western Muslim young adults navigate the collective threat of increasing islamophobia, though the Muslim identity development is understood to be particularly affected by social and political forces (Meer, 2008). Ever since 9/11, Western governmental policies have singled out Muslim populations in response to the looming threat of radicalisation, thereby marginalising them in the process (Abbas, 2007; Afshar, 2013; Raz, 2006). Western media often depicts Muslims with stereotypes which confound ethnicity and religion, associating Islam with violence and portraying them as potential security threats (Alsultany, 2012; Bankoff, 2003; Rousseau & Jamil, 2008; Shaheen, 2003). Some Muslim young adults attempt to exemplify a national Muslim identity in response, despite feeling dismissed by society (Abbas & Siddique, 2012). Other studies find Western Muslims feeling forced to choose between their religious and national identities, painting the two as mutually exclusive (Haddad, 2007; Zimmerman, 2015). Thus, there is a need to understand the religious identity development of Western Muslims in light of their socio-political environments.

First and foremost, who are ‘Western Muslims?’ To answer this, we first need a basic overview how modernising and secularising forces have shaped Muslim communities in the Western context, as discussed by Roy (2004). The first is the deterritorialisation of Islam, where Islam is no longer endemic within a particular political context, but rather consists of many cultures within a secular state. Of note here is that Islam in the Western context constitutes a transformation from cultural hegemony to a minority status, with an absence of cultural or political coercion to

perceive Islam in one particular manner. Muslim migrants now share the religious identity with other ‘similarly Islamic’ ethnic cultures. The second consists of the unlinking culture and Islam upon migration, whereby religious elements become salient and enter consciousness (Entelis, Eickelman, Piscatori, & Labat, 1996). In this, the thought of the Muslim community, the *ummah*, grows from a localized community with boundaries, to an imaginary community spanning all regions and cultures.

The third and central element to the thesis of this article offers that Islam in the West is necessarily experienced as objective; Muslims must feel they follow the ‘true’ Islamic faith. Entelis et al. (1996) describe objectification as a process by which basic questions come to the fore in the heightened consciousness of a large number of believers – often as a result of a religion’s minority status. This emphasis on objectivity is seen across religions and follows the same Western philosophical orientation of self-actualization. It is a product of individualisation that gives primacy to experience, and is conducive to the range of identities we observe today – from liberal to neofundamentalist Muslim identities (Roy, 2004). The experience of objectivity here should not be understood as one based on knowledge. Rather, it is predicated on the experience of feeling like one’s Islam is ‘pure’ and free of cultural impurities. According to Roy (2004), born-again religious individuals (i.e. those with a renewed interest in faith) are especially in search of a religiosity founded on the experience of truth, with directives that can be instantly understood and followed. Finally, the perceived need for objectivity is also the product of the many controversies in public discourse surrounding Islam. As a result, Muslims feel they must be able to give objective responses to questions that are posed to them.

The Western Muslim identity is thus global in scale, disassociated from its historic origins and at times unrelated to actual religiosity making it, in essence, a neo-ethnic identity. Of course, as a neo-ethnic identity, it encompasses then elements of race, gender and culture that is diffused and often confused under the elusive category of

‘Muslim’. Social psychological research consistently finds that the religious identity of adolescents evolves as they begin to assert their independence (Mullikin, 2006; Peek, 2005). Extrapolating on the process, Peek (2005) found the religious identity of young Muslims typically falling within three categories of development: ascribed, chosen and declared. Ascribed identity relates to youth who give little attention their Muslim identity; the religious identity is inherited by their parents. The identity is then considered chosen when the youth then embarks on a process of introspection, and overcomes the identity’s taken-for-grantedness. Finally, Muslim youth are in the final stage of their identity development when it’s declared to others in spite of – and often as a result of – collective threat. While Peek offers a basic framework of how the Muslim identity develops, social identities are also understood to be produced and transformed according to a variety of different social processes (Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002). There is an intimate relationship between how Muslim young adults perceive their family, peer environments and the wider political contexts, in the process of developing an objective experience of the Muslim social identity. As such, by superimposing the theoretical framework of Peek (2005) upon the political landscape of Western Muslims illustrated by Roy (2004), our research set out to explore how Western Muslim young adults develop their Muslim identity from ascribed to chosen in light of the wider political contexts, emphasizing the role of family and friends in the process.

Methodology

The data for this paper was taken from a larger research corpus comparing the social identity development of Western-born Muslim young adults in Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen. The cities were chosen as a function of the primary author’s intimate familiarity with their respective Muslim communities. For this study, we explored the narratives of 20 Muslim second-generation Muslims within an age range of 18 to

25. Eight participants were interviewed in Berlin, Germany, nine in Copenhagen, and three from Montreal, Canada. We introduced the research project to prospective participants as a global exploration of their identity development. The Montreal participants were recruited using a snowball method and flyers posted within student associations from high schools, CEGEPs and universities around the Montreal area. The Berlin participants were recruited from a weekly gathering at a mosque. The Copenhagen participants were recruited via word of mouth. Interested individuals were explained the nature of the study, its purpose, duration as well as potential consequences. In light of the elusive neo-ethnic categorization ‘Muslims’ in Western contexts, the only barrier of entry for prospective participants was the self-identification of ‘Muslim’, irrespective of personal definition. A Western Muslim then, for research purposes, was any self-identifying Muslim individual born in a Western country.

Interviews lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended according to the qualitative nature of the research. We promoted a non-threatening, two-way dialogue in order to solicit an organic narrative detailing the social identities of the participants. A semi-structured interview guide was developed in an open-ended format. Interviews began with the question ‘What is your identity?’ Various social identities were then addressed in the interview, focusing primarily on religious, national and ethnic affiliations. In their narrative, participants were asked to describe how they perceive the development of each social identity, discussing the significance of the social environment if it arose. Follow-up questions such “how have you come to understand your Muslim identity in such a way?” provoked further discussions on the process of identity development.

Interviews were transcribed, analyzed and coded for individual themes.

Qualitative Analysis Strategy

As per the qualitative nature of this research, a thematic content analysis was used to discover patterns within the narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A contextualized approach was used to address both the meanings individuals extrapolate from their experiences, as well as the socio-political contexts which formulate the boundaries in which meaning can be construed. After providing a rich description of the data set, thematic patterns – both related and unrelated to our research objectives – were explored. Our analysis primarily emphasized themes relating to how parents and peers impact social identity development. Two researchers coding separately found a high degree of consistency in extrapolated themes. Themes were then categorized and linked to the overall research objectives, and a mind map was developed connecting themes to particular social contexts. The primary author selected several key themes pertinent to the discussion of religious identity development.

From family to friends: choosing the Muslim identity

Our participants related a variety of different inspirations in the process of their Muslim identity development. Many shared the importance of their family's involvement in this process, which continued well into their adulthood. Other Muslim young adults related a gradual disengagement from family influence concerning matters of religion - this article relates to them. The stories of their religious development often began at a young age. As children, they say, their parents provided them the basic education of what constitutes the Muslim identity. This later developed into a personal quest for religiosity outside the family context. Their religious development did not take place in a vacuum however; peer relationships were the vehicles in which knowledge was sought and validated, diminishing the role of parents in their narratives. Reiterating the findings of Peek (2005), though parents provide the fundaments of religious identity development, the association to parents slowly disappeared over adolescence, making way for personal

exploration and peer relations. This trend underscores an understanding in which the religious identity is thought to be inherited with the cultural baggage of the parents, which these young Muslims would later try to separate. Building upon the work of Peek (2005), we extrapolate a process underlying Muslim identity development: the perceived need for objectivity.

Parents and cultural traditions

The ethnic identity, as associated with the parental context, is often described along hereditary, racial and linguistic lines. In other words, the ethnic identity is inevitable, as Hassan summarizes succinctly: '*I can't run away from being Pakistani.*' For him, his ethnicity is ultimately inescapable. Most participants would agree with Hassan, stating they have no qualms with their ethnic identities *per se*, but rather only when it confounds religious practices. Hassan describes how his growing of a beard for religious purposes, for example, put him at odds with his family when he started taking his faith more seriously: '*I can't say I had a strong Muslim identity, but I knew Islam was right. My parents however were saying when I started growing a beard that I was becoming too extreme.*' Hassan reveals here the point when his religious identity detached from family traditions, exemplified by the significance of his beard. In many cases, as it was with Hassan, this was precipitated by a group of religious friends who demonstrated a form of practicing Islam that differs from the religious practices found at home. Young adults such as Hassan thus develop their religious identity upon a framework that not only attempts to realize the most objective Muslim identity possible, but one that is explicitly non-ethnic as well. Sonia, born to a Romanian mother and a Syrian father in Copenhagen, shares similar thoughts:

Sonia: And that's actually a problem I've been aware of since my teenage years, that lot of Arabs consider themselves the 'right' Muslims because they have the Arabic background. Of course, the Quran is revealed in the Arabic language and Arabic is important. But that doesn't mean if you're

not Arab you're not Muslim. So that's why thinking a little more about that fact, the Quran should be the starting point, and not your ethnic background.

Discussing her Muslim identity, Sonia spontaneously insists that the Muslim is not an Arab. This exclamation is crucial to her understanding of what constitutes the Muslim identity; its centrality is accentuated by the fact she has been aware of it since her adolescence. Sonia is thus relating how trivial ethnicities are vis-à-vis the Quran, which she considers be the only true measuring stick of the Muslim identity. Proclaiming this, she challenges the perceived nationalism and ethnocentrism pervasive in the Muslim world. Sonia later shares her dismay with mosque congregations in Denmark which are divided according to ethnic lines. As such, her Muslim identity development is not only an explicit critique of nationalistic movements dividing Muslims across the world, but is a particular product of the historical migration context of Muslims in Denmark.

Rima, born to Palestinian parents in Berlin, is especially concerned with how her family confuses cultural traditions with religious practices, '*because certain traditions don't coincide with my religion, like when it comes to marriage, that's not completely correct or congruent with Islam.*' Rima relates how marriage is embedded with great religious significance in her family, yet is endorsed in a manner she feels is incongruent with her Muslim identity. Family traditions are thus depicted as antithetical to an objective Islam. Rima in turn asserts her agency and challenges her family's demands, basing herself upon a platform that her understanding of Islam is closer to the truth. Zeinab, born to Iraqi parents in Copenhagen, echoes these thoughts:

Zeinab: As I said that our parents had their mistakes. But it is interesting to find out what kind of mistakes our parents had regarding the Muslim identity and then not follow them - developing ourselves to be something

better. It's not like I'm criticizing my parents completely. Of course, they had influenced me but there's always room for development and improvement. I think every single person should always be researching Islam all the time; it is also of the prophetic traditions to always seek knowledge.

Zeinab highlights here quite succinctly a prevalent attitude among Muslim young adults. Of note is that the parents are mistaken in their religious practice while Zeinab, on the other hand with infinite access to religious knowledge online, is closer to the truth. The perceived need for objectivity is clear. If Zeinab is indeed following a more truthful understanding of Islam, or if that even exists, is irrelevant. What is relevant however, is the importance of objectivity. Zeinab's thoughts reflect the implicit need for an objective Muslim identity, and deny the emulation of parental traditions as a means of discovering it. Yousef, born in Berlin to a half-German, half-Lebanese mother, and an Egyptian father, shares Zeinab's attitude and relates how cultural traditions at home were upheld with a misplaced sense of patriotism:

Yousef: I grew up in I would say in a nationalistic household, where my dad had a strong emphasis on being all patriotic about Egypt. I sort of distanced myself from that because, I do have strong feeling towards being Arab, but not being Egyptian or Lebanese, or any other country. Maybe I would say I have a certain responsibility to the Arab Islamic body, but not even that. I would say that the Islamic feeling towards the Muslim community is greater than towards any one nation.

For Yousef, ethnicity is perceived largely as a form of nationalism, which he believes is profoundly divisive within the larger Muslim community. He believes rather in the potential to envision a new, global understanding of the Muslim community, with others who share the same outrage towards nationalism and ethnocentrism.

Friends and objectivity

The importance accorded to a perceived objective Muslim identity underscores the disconnect in relations between friends and family. Indeed, it appears some Muslim young adults develop their religious Muslim identity in contrast to the practices of their immigrant parents. They turn instead to friends who share their religious motivations, embedded within an environment of belongingness and commitment. Most of our participants thus underscored their peers as essential in the learning process of their faith. Indeed, Muslim youth are found to increasingly distinguish their faith from the cultural practices of their parents with the help of their friends (Peek, 2005; Zimmerman, 2015). Whereas the Islam of the peers represented a perceived effort towards an objective Muslim identity, the Islam of parents was often depicted as one of cultural tradition and custom. Danial, a Copenhagen-born participant born to Albanian parents, underscores this distinction clearly:

Danial: Basically, it's a difficult question to answer because it's abstract. When I was younger I got a lot of impressions of what a Muslim is and they were all very different, but I was too young to choose which one is right. But with time, you meet with people who are more knowledgeable than you, who spark your interest in what Islam really is. In the end, obviously the way Islam is practiced at home is different than the ways it is practiced among friends.

Danial relates how varied the Muslim identities were growing up, later finding solid ground among knowledgeable friends who led him in the right direction. He is critical towards his parents' cultural background, arguing their enactment of Islam is based on ethnic heritage, and less upon knowledge. Participants like Danial would insist that their friends were vital in acquiring theological knowledge, either directly via social emulation, or indirectly by providing opportunities to attend Islamic classes together. Theological knowledge was thus the criterion separating cultural

traditions from perceived objectivity. Indeed, many participants suggested that sound theological knowledge – as established upon the Quran and objective Prophetic traditions, they argue - is central to the growth of a Muslim identity. They contrast the Muslim identity thus with their national and ethnic identities which they argue are ephemeral in nature, prone to changes according to time and place. Theological knowledge is ultimately perceived as the vehicle driving the individual towards perceived objectivity. Discussing the knowledge needed to develop the Muslim identity, Sonia relates how '*the feeling of one being a Muslim without thinking about all the other stuff* [relating here to the pillars of Islam], *for me the person doesn't or hasn't acquired enough knowledge about what it is to be a Muslim.*' Sonia is arguing that those who ascribe themselves the Muslim identity, without insight of what Islam entails, are deficient in their religiosity. Once more, as it is with others, it is not the actual knowledge of Islam that is important, but the process of learning that provokes the experience of objectivity.

Ferina, born to Pakistani parents in Montreal, relates how she eventually had to leave home to acquire a proper understanding of Islam:

Ferina: I think it was from home, I was taught from a young age, pretty much. But to actually understand the foundation of Islam properly, that was not from home. That was mostly institutions, so basically Islamic classes. And even doing my own research, to really understanding what Islam means.

For Ferina, the Islamic classes she attends represent the significance of personal choice in the development of the Muslim identity. Ferina is thus enacting her agency in deciding the terms of her theological education and, perhaps more importantly, choosing for herself a Muslim social environment other than her family. This emphasis on choice once again is paired with the Muslim identity, but it grows relationally within the social environment. Her narrative depicts a picture in which

social emulation of her peers and mentors soon take hold after the initial choice. As such, those who choose a particular understanding of what the Muslim identity entails ultimately find others who share similar attitudes, thereby reifying this understanding. Salam, born to Syrian parents in Berlin, opens our discussion underlining the importance of Muslim friends in her lives:

Salam: When I think about my friends, all my friends are practicing Muslims. I don't feel like I'm in a Christian country, because I go to pray after breaking my fast, and I really feel like I'm in a Muslim land, because there are so many Muslims, and there are so many blessings.

Salam here affirms how her friends establish the fundament of her Muslim identity. Significantly, she relates how her friends provide the feeling of living in a ‘Muslim land’ - without specifying any particular country. Salam is sharing an implicit fantasy of an ideal community established upon a collective of practicing Muslims – like her friends - revealing thus an implicit anti-ethnic, anti-nationalistic attitude. Hassan, born to Pakistani parents in Copenhagen, shares Salam’s feelings of how essential his Muslim peers are for his religious development:

Hassan: I used to not enjoy that so much and I had a friend who didn't like it either, we are very close, we pushed each other into listening to lectures on YouTube. There is a channel called the Deen show so we started watching that ands listening. At the time we weren't praying, but I was interested. It was funny, one night he called me at night and he's like "let's pray", he just told me that at three clock in the morning. "We've seen so much; we just need to pray." We began to pray, and I only hung out with him. Just me and him, my other friends were drinking and partying and things like that. Then I started making new friends from Hizb ul-Tahrir, I went to their conferences and stuff like that. They were doing good work but I didn't think it was the right approach. I thought

they're doing a lot of good for us then but I had a lot of problems with the creed. I just didn't feel like it was the closest to the prophetic traditions. I had a cousin who followed the Quran and the prophetic traditions, and he tried to push me towards that direction. There is a place called the Dawah center. I started going there.

Hassan's narrative is both a coming of age tale of his religious identity and an illustration of Copenhagen's various Muslim groups. For Hassan, his process of Muslim development entailed the formation and erosion of several circles of friends until he finally settled on a group located at the Dawah Center. Both his friend and his cousin, with whom Hassan describes being very close, play key roles in his story. Hassan says he navigated through a variety of Muslim groups located in Copenhagen, cross-examining their beliefs with what he perceives to be 'the right approach' to Islam. When questioned what his barometer was for judging the objectivity of groups, Hassan relates the centrality of his cousin's authority in his experience of 'objectvity'. Objectivtiy here is not the product of any formal epistemological investigation; Hassan disassociated with Hizb ul-Tahrir because he simply did not experience them as 'objective' according to his cousin's counsel. As such, when he embarked on his own journey of developing his Muslim identity from ascribed to chosen; Hassan carefully navigated the social landscape in a manner which implicitly affirmed his cousin's understanding of Islam. The experience of an objective Islam remained however the decisive criterion upon which his religious identity had to be established. Though he needed his cousin's affirmation, Hassan had to be sure his experiences were true.

Why an objective Muslim identity?

The emphasis on objectivity is not surprising. Ali (2005) relates how American Muslim women, in the process of their spiritual development, sought to develop an

objective understanding of Islam that is free from cultural prejudice and experientially ‘authentic’. Individuals generally view their ethical beliefs as personally objective and unaffected by social conventions, especially when grounded in a religious framework (Goodwin & Darley, 2008). Besides the norm however, the need for objectivity among our Muslim participants also appears to be an artefact of their Western socio-political environments (Roy, 2004). In this section, we extrapolate several distinct elements outlining the necessity for objectivity.

First, Western Muslim youth are found to develop an emerging religious identity in response to the negativity surrounding Islam in the media (Modood, Hershberg, & Moore, 2002). Unsurprisingly, most of our participants felt that Islam’s public vilification necessitated a response. Exclaiming that the media’s portrayal of Muslims is categorically unrepresentative of real Muslims is as important to these young adults as defining what a Muslim really is. This manner of correcting a public image however necessitates a platform of objectivity. As such, negative portrayals of Islam appear to drive Muslim young adults towards exploring and subsequently affirming the image of a ‘true Muslim’. Shaimaa, born to Palestinian parents in Berlin, explains:

Shaimaa: In fact, I occupied myself with Islam only because the media said that Islam oppresses women. I didn't know, I had never opened up the Quran before. But I felt something was wrong. So I went to the library, found the Quran, and read it. And I was shocked to see all the good that was in it. I just researched things myself, and I found out what the truth was, and it clearly conflicts with the media. I don't think that the media ever read the Quran.

Shaimaa reveals how the German media’s portrayal of Muslim women prompted her interest in Islam. Previously an ascribed identity inherited by her parents, Shaimaa begins to immerse herself in theological research. For her, the means of protesting

the media's portrayal necessitated a platform of knowledge that is irrefutable. This then developed into the basis for her religious identity development; an objective understanding of Islam and the Muslim identity thus become inseparable. Rima, born to Palestinian parents in Berlin, similarly relates how the criticisms she was hearing about Muslims in class drove her towards research:

Rima: I went to that school, and they were all German and you often get into discussions which always motivated me to learn more about Islam because I needed arguments to talk with them and that's why I engaged myself with specific themes in Islam, which are controversial in the media, of which everyone used to be talking about, or we would talk about in class for example. So I had to engage myself with these themes more, and it just became background knowledge, so when I engaged with it, everything went together.

Rima's story displays how political realities translate in lives of these Muslim young adults, as islamophobia is negotiated in everyday contexts. Here, her Berlin school is the setting where her Muslim identity develops from ascribed to chosen. Like Shaimaa, Rima previously related to her Muslim identity as a function of ethnic heritage, but criticisms of Islam at school established the need for iron-clad refutations. The personal need for a perceived objective understanding of Islam, either through personal research or peers, thus became an implicit foundation upon which Rima's Muslim identity developed. Asma, born to Pakistani parents in Montreal, relates the importance of having an objective understanding of Islam in lieu of world events:

Asma: It's based on knowledge you've gained through personal experience. There was a big controversy over the mosque in Pakistan of training young kids to fight in jihad and whatnot. They took advantage of minors who did not know much but if you study the conditions the

families, a lot of them were poor, their personal experiences, the way they've been growing up in poverty. It was those personal experiences that led them to, you know... for someone to punch someone in the name of Islam, the reason why it's easy for him to do that is because of personal experience which is leading their Islam in the first place. I wouldn't even say it's Islam. Someone took advantage of these people, or people have taken advantage of their personal experiences.

Asma relates her thoughts on extremism as we discuss the significance of Islam's portrayal in the media. She shares her understanding of how terrorist groups develop in South Asia, suggesting it begins as a function of ignorance due to socio-political circumstances. For Asma, those taking advantage of others, as well as those being taken advantage of, are both victims of their cultural experiences informing their Muslim identity. She explains in turn the protection that an objective understanding of Islam offers. If Muslims only had a real understanding of Islam, she argues, personal experiences, cultural traditions and political circumstances would not produce the type of Muslim terrorists we see on the news. For Shaimaa, Rima and Asma, the objectivity needed to defend Islam was not to be found at home, where she perceived family traditions to be established upon ethnic customs. Instead, as described in the previous sections, these young women ventured outside the family context, seeking knowledge and companionship that shared their need for an objective Muslim understanding in order to defend Islam accordingly.

Second, objectivity was also the means by which these second-generation Muslims engaged the imaginary Muslim community, which now extends beyond national and cultural boundaries in the Western context. Western Muslims thus challenge local cultural practices of mosques, and distant cultural practices of countries such as Saudi Arabia. In challenging tradition, the need for re-establishing an objective Muslim identity becomes significant. Some participants thus had a profoundly anti-ethnic attitude, often taking harsh stances towards cultural Muslims who carry the

religion in name and not in practice. Zeinab relates the logic underlying the dismissal of cultural traditions:

Zeinab: I think the main issue I'm finding is that, in Islam, rules never change across time and space, but culture and traditions do change with time. What used to be pure Iraqi 15 years ago may not be what it is today, it's shifting, the traditions are changing. So these are shifting cultural identities. When it comes to religion, it's not shifting.

Zeinab asserts that the Muslim identity is static from a theological standpoint. She suggests that her Muslim identity remains a constant in an ever-changing landscape of social identities. As such, when discussing her Iraqi identity, Zeinab relates its insignificance as a function of how it is perceived vis-a-vis her Muslim identity. The objectivity of the Muslim identity becomes the foundation upon which other social identities are compared. Indeed, many participants critiqued the foundations of other cultural identities, both national and ethnic, on the basis of their ephemeral nature - they lack the perceived timeless quality of Islamic traditions. Furthermore, they assert that if a social identity is prone to change, it must then change according to the desires of the population. Ethnic and national identities are just reflections of a society's contemporary zeitgeist.

Danial, born in Copenhagen to Albanian parents, professes an objective understanding of the Muslim identity to which, he argues, many Western Muslims do not abide. In fact, it appears his perceived objectivity of Islam reflects a desire to publicly affirm a capacity to differentiate himself from 'Westernized Muslims' in the first place. This is in reaction to the great variety of Muslim identities he perceives in society. In stark attempts to establish certainty amidst ambiguity, Danial strongly affirms the objectivity of his identity. His reasoning why other Muslim identities are subjective – they derive their understanding from social contexts rather than objective sources - reflects the very same homegrown development of his own

Muslim identity as well. This contradiction may underlie the Danial's need to showcase the necessity for Muslims to appear as 'objective' as possible, irrespective of how this objectivity was established. Hassan, born to Pakistani parents in Copenhagen, shares many of Danial's thoughts:

Hassan: I would say the cultural Muslims are more focused on the worldly life. They forget that there's an afterlife. They're thinking about how to make money and get a good job. And I don't see that as a priority. For someone to make my mom happy, you need a big career a big job, etcetera, to be successful in this worldly life.

Hassan describes here how his personal, religious development can be at odds with the expectations of his parents. Raised in a Pakistani household with an ascribed Muslim identity, it was during adolescence when he understood the need to differentiate between ethnic and objective Islamic teachings. For Hassan, this tension between ethnicity and religion persists even with Western-born Muslims. Elaborating on his statement, he explains how many Western Muslims have fallen prey to the habits of Western culture. Irrespective if the Muslim identity is confounded either with ethnic or mainstream Western traditions; Hassan believes the muddling of Islam with culture comes at a spiritual cost. He asserts that the Muslim identity must necessarily be established upon the foundation of what a 'real' Muslim is, first and foremost. There appears to be a particular psychological need to this attitude. When discussing other groups such Hizb-ul-Tahrir, as described in the previous section, Hassan relates how they do good work, but are ultimately flawed in their understanding. If this judgement can be generalised then to all other Muslim groups, then a perceived objective Muslim identity liberates Hassan from the uncertainty embedded in the diversity of Muslim practices found in Copenhagen. It allows, above all else, to claim a sense of certainty that is psychologically reassuring (Hirsh, Mar, & Peterson, 2012).

Discussion

Discussions on the need for an ‘objective faith’ among Western Muslims have recently been reinvigorated (Roy, 2004). We reviewed how the need for a perceived objective Muslim identity reflects Peek’s description of how the religious identity of youth evolves from ascribed to chosen. Among our Western Muslim participants, the need to contest ethnic traditions ascribed to Islam was implicit in this evolution, as well as the collective search for ‘objectivity’ among peers. These results highlight how intrinsic socio-political elements are embedded in religious identity development, thereby providing a theoretical link between the social identity theory of Peek (2005) and the sociological analysis of Roy (2004). Our participants also affirm two significant sociopolitical elements underlying the need for objectivity in Western contexts, namely controversies pertaining to Islam in public discourse and the negotiation of the non-geographical imaginary Muslim *ummah*. There are however other elements implicit in the narratives of our Western Muslim young adults.

The first is the weakening of religious authorities in Western Muslim communities. According to Roy (2004), religion is deeply intertwined within the cultural landscape of Muslim majority countries with social and political forms of coercion to perceive Islam in a particular light. These perceptions of Islam are more or less mediated by the religious scholars of the environment. Upon migration however, Islam and pre-migratory cultures undergo an explicit transformation. Indeed, as discussed above, the Westernisation process of the Muslim identity involves a transformation from local, culturally established norms to a global community disassociated from its ethnic baggage. Thus the political coercion to practice Islam in a certain manner weakens (though it may persist on the communal level), and the role and authority of religious scholars to sustain a particular religious system diminishes.

Second, the weakening of social authority runs concurrently with the modernisation of Islam on a global scale (Roy, 2004). The Internet provides Muslims an unprecedented level of access to religious texts and knowledge, unimaginable only decades ago. The break between culture and Islam ushers a want for direct access to religious texts the internet provides, as a means of self-certifying an ‘objective’ religiosity. The value of formal scholarly training devalues as religion is increasingly experienced primarily on “the sudden feeling of being in touch with truth” (Roy, 2004). Whereas previously there was verticality inherent within religious teacher/student learning environments, the Internet offers a horizontality in Islamic learning in which individuals are simultaneously producers and devourers of knowledge. Traditional environments are thus replaced with social media platforms where anyone can be a religious authority. This authority is not established upon religious qualifications. Rather, it is contingent on personal qualities such as charisma, as well as the ability objectify Islam in response to real or imaginary questions in tangible, unambiguous terms; as explained previously, controversies surrounding Islam (e.g. the veil, jihad, etc.) force Western Muslims to take unequivocal positions. Consequently, the success of online Muslim polemists and their ability to cater to the need for ‘perceived objectivity’ in quickly digestible sound bites reifies the mentality that Islam and the Muslim identity must be clear-cut in their understanding and formulation.

Other scholars have related to the perceived need for objectivity in Western contexts as a function of globalisation, albeit in other words. Özyürek (2014), for example, observes the rise of Salafism in Germany as especially alluring due to its anti-ethnic and anti-nationalist emphasis. This appears to be a reaction to Germany’s historical ethnocentric formulations of citizenship, which prevented even descendants from naturalising (they are not ethnically German). Salafists in turn reject blind imitation of Islamic legal schools common to contemporary Muslim countries. This rejection produces a break from traditional ethnic forms of being Muslim, while advocating

for a formulation of Islamic practice that is free of cultural bias. Özyürek (2014) relates this rise in Salafism to German converts, who are attracted to this basic philosophy in light of the prevalent cultural practices of Muslim-born cultural groups. Our research however underlines how this anti-ethnic attitude does not belong exclusively to proclaimed Salafists; indeed, none of our participants declared affiliation to Salafism, and some even took staunch positions against it. Instead, the need for objectivity is endemic among second-generation Muslims in general; Roy (2004) even argues its foundational for the entire spectrum of Western Muslim identities, from liberal to neo-fundamentalism. We agree with Roy, and venture that the need for an objective Muslim identity precedes the rise of Salafist movements in Western countries; one should remain cautious then from inferring that an anti-national, anti-ethnic Muslim youth is *ipso facto* a Salafist. Instead, researchers should remain aware of the socio-political forces implicated in seeking an objective formulation of Islam.

Our results are especially significant in light of contemporary discussions regarding radicalisation. The current political understanding of the radicalisation process is person-centric, suggesting it hinges upon the psychological vulnerabilities of the individual (Coppock & McGovern, 2014). In turn, it is said radical individuals develop a narrow-minded understanding of Islam – often via the internet – that shuns religious interpretations outside their framework (Johnson, 2004). In this sense, it appears that the insistence of an objective Muslim identity, as professed by some of our participants, seems to relate to the narrow-minded attitude of Muslim radicals. Our research demonstrates however socio-political elements underlying the necessity of experiencing an objective Muslim identity, such as the perceived vilification of Muslims in public discourse which drives the development of the Muslim identity towards a perceived objectivity that is impenetrable to critique. This analysis suggests, as Coppock and McGovern (2014) offer, that processes of radicalisation are not entirely products of psychological vulnerabilities, as such a theory dismisses the

socio-political environments in which radicals develop. Our contribution to radicalisation research is that it may indeed be a by-product of wider social discourses which institute a requisite for developing an ‘objective’ Muslim identity, first and foremost. This would suggest that anti-radicalisation policy makers should explore the need of combating islamophobia in Western countries as an effective means of preventing further radicals from developing. This is an important avenue in future research.

Limitations

The first limitation in our research involves participants whose narratives did not explicitly relate a perceived need for objectivity. Waqas for example, a Copenhagen-born high school student from a Pakistani household, relates how his Muslim identity represents the traditions he inherited from his parents, which he hopes to pass on to his children. Waqas thus perceives his Pakistani and Muslim identities to be one and the same, relating a perspective which values heritage and tradition. The second exception consists of individuals whose parents explicitly distinguished between ethnicity and religion. Feride for example, a Copenhagen-born woman from a Turkish family, says she shares no inclination in challenging her ethnic origins, and displays no difficulties in appreciating the intra-religious diversity in the Muslim community. Significantly, Feride also hesitated in defining what a Muslim was for fear of excluding others from the definition. Waqas and Feride are two important examples of how Western Muslim young adults vary in religious identity development beyond the perceived need for objectivity.

Second, the perceived experience of objectivity presumably differs according to the socio-political characteristics of Denmark, Germany and Canada. Though the overarching objective of our research juxtaposes these three contexts, the comparative element was forsaken in this article for the sake of brevity and in

accordance to Roy's (2004) general discussion of Western Muslims. Prospective research should however detail how the perceived need for objectivity varies across socio-political contexts. The same limitation applies to the idiosyncrasies of our participants. By no means are we generalizing our participants (such as a second-generation Pakistani male from Canada and a fourth-generation Turkish woman from Germany) under the umbrella of 'Western Muslim'; this would dismiss crucial elements of ethnicity, gender, race and migration history. Nonetheless, due to the narrow theoretical scope of this article, discussions on the perceived need of objectivity were necessarily kept broad. Prospective research should however unpack the idiosyncrasies of Western Muslims by considering these crucial factors in identity development.

Conclusion

The general evolution of the religious identity - from ascribed to chosen - among Western Muslim coincides with a perceived need for objectivity. The basis of this need however, as we have explored in this article, is partly determined by the socio-political environments in which these Western Muslim young adults are raised. Perceived public attacks on Islam and religious traditions based on cultural practices establish a precedent for attitudes which disfavor uncertainty and intra-religious diversity. More research is needed to understand how this emphasis on objectivity develops, and how Muslim young adults choose interpretations over others. In addition, prospective research should explore the religious identity development of Muslim young adults whose narratives do not emphasize objectivity. Furthermore, it is unclear how Islam's historical emphasis on knowledge acquisition and socio-political forces interact in the development of this attitude (Rosenthal, 1970). Research should also consider the relational consequences of Muslim young adults who contest the religious traditions of their family. Finally, research can benefit from

developing the concept of identity objectivity upon prior theoretical frameworks of psychological certainty, in which uncertainty is understood to provoke feelings of discomfort, anxiety and an active search for meaning.

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CHAPITRE IV

ARTICLE III

Contextualising Article 3

This article goes beyond the research questions stipulated at the outset of our project by introducing the perspectives of Western Muslim converts. We unexpectedly recruited ten converts during our recruitment process - much more than we initially expected. It appears Muslim converts were especially interested in discussing their identity development, as the subject appears to strike a chord in the challenges they face negotiating their relationships to their family, society and the Muslim community. Converts are in a unique position to inform the social construction of the Muslim identity outside the confines of ethnic family heritage. In other words, their religious identity development must inevitably reflect the social understanding of the Muslim identity within their environments, notwithstanding media influence. We decided thus to devote an entire article exploring the narratives of converts, to the exclusion of Muslim-born participants, while maintaining the central research questions of our project. As such, the following article examines how Muslim converts develop their social identities, both prior to and after their conversion, in light of their socio-political environments.

Title

Changing Identities: A Case Study of Western Muslim Converts whose Conversion Revised their Relationship to their National Identity

Abstract

Few studies explore the impact conversion to Islam has on a Western individual's social identity configuration. This article focuses on six Western Muslim converts – three from Montreal, two from Berlin, and one from Copenhagen - who experienced difficulties relating to their national identities prior to conversion, exploring how it developed afterwards. A qualitative interview guide was adapted in a semi-structured format to the demands of each individual, and interviews were analyzed applying thematic content analysis. The participants reveal how they revised their social identity configuration upon conversion, ultimately reversing their antagonistic relationship to their national identity. Their narratives relate how political realities are embedded in the perception and development of the Western Muslim identity, necessitating a revaluation of their national identity as a form of social critique. Our results demonstrate how socio-political experiences of discrimination and race are all significantly implicated in the process of conversion and Muslim identity development.

Introduction

Western Muslims are increasingly perceived with less sympathy than other religious or ethnic groups (Gallup World). The media often depicts Islam as violent, and Western Muslims are increasingly perceived as potential security threats (Alsultany, 2012; Bankoff, 2003; Rousseau & Jamil, 2008; Shaheen, 2003). In turn, islamophobia in social discourse is seen with less disapproval than other forms of discrimination, and politicians are increasingly raising Islamic fundamentalism in their campaigns (Morey & Yaqin, 2011). Despite all this, research suggests that conversion rates to Islam have been on the rise since 9/11 (Eletreby, 2010). Although the Muslim population is steadily increasing in Western countries, few statistics document conversion rates (Grim & Karim, 2011). Estimates of Muslim converts in Germany range between 20,000 and 100,000 (Ozyurek, 2010). In Denmark, it is estimated that between 2,100 and 2,800 individual have converted to Islam in the past three decades (Gudrun Jensen, 2008). Finally, Quebec was estimated to have between 4000 and 5000 Muslim converts in 2001 (Castel, 2006).

Individuals convert to Islam for intellectual, experimental and affective reasons (Köse & Loewenthal, 2000). This denotes an intellectual search for meaning and purpose, an openness to experiment with different ways of living, and a likelihood that the convert is closely affiliated with another Muslim prior to conversion. Carrothers (2004) notes that the literature on religious conversion however neglects the impact of conversion itself, such as its impact on social identities. A social identity relates to group membership based upon a sense of commonalities with others (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). This camaraderie may be established upon a shared language, religion, ancestry, ethnicity and citizenship (Hendry et al., 2007). However, few studies investigate the effects conversion has on an individual's social identities, nor how converts negotiate prevalent negative imagery of Islam in public contexts. (Eletreby, 2010).

Research on the development of the Muslim identity among converts according to socio-political contexts is increasing (e.g. see Mossiere (2013) for Quebec and French converts; see Özyürek (2012) for German converts), as is the increased interest in the incidence of radicalised converts (Karagiannis, 2012; Kleinmann, 2012). This article builds upon a growing foundation in research exploring the impact conversion has upon the social identity configurations of individuals. Western converts find themselves at a cross-section between the growing xenophobia towards Muslim migrants and representing an Islam that is free from ethnic baggage. This position is integral in the production of a ‘Western Islam’ which not only challenges predominant narratives of the national identity, but traditional migrant narratives of the Muslim identity as well (Özyürek, 2014; Rogozen□Soltar, 2012). Religious conversion to Islam can also be seen as a form of social commentary, disrupting basic notions of national identity and citizenship (Viswanathan, 1998). Özyürek (2014) found that conversion to Islam deconstructs pre-defined social and political constructions of being German. As such, converts are not only asserting their national identity, but indeed promoting a formulation of Islam that challenges the ethnocentric vision of Muslim born immigrant communities. Özyürek (2014) argues that ‘German conversion to Islam involves parallel processes of identity de- and reconstruction that creates multipositional alternative communities while destabilizing the religio-racial boundaries and hierarchies of social life’ (p. 14). This arises from a deep desire to change society’s views of Islam and Muslims, in light of increasing islamophobia (Roald, 2004). As such, the political contexts play an integral role in the social identity development of Muslim converts.

There is a dearth of research addressing the social identity configuration of Muslim converts who experienced conflicts with their national identity prior to conversion. Our research builds upon the theoretical foundations of Özyürek (2014), with the intention of exploring how Muslim converts from Berlin, Copenhagen and Montreal experience and express their social identities before and after conversion. This article

thus addresses the following question: how does conversion to Islam impact the social identity configuration of individuals who previously challenged their national identification? We share the narratives of six Western Muslim converts from diverging political contexts who experienced difficulties negotiating their national identities, but whose social identity configuration all converge ultimately towards the supremacy of the Muslim identity post-conversion. The first three converts we discuss reveal how their national and ethnic identity conflicts were resolved by converting to Islam. Thereupon, we explore the narrative of three more converts whose early experiences of discrimination led them to antagonize their national identity; this resentment however seemingly reversed upon conversion. We finalize by extrapolating implications of the results in light of the socio-political contexts which are increasingly discriminatory towards Western Muslims.

Methodology

The data for this paper was taken from a wider research corpus investigating the Muslim identity development of 30 Muslim young adults in Canada, Germany and Denmark. From this data set, we discovered that ten of our participants were converts. Due to the exploratory nature of this topic, a qualitative research methodology was most suitable to address our research objectives. For this study, we extracted a total of 10 Muslim converts within an age range of 18 to 25 from our data set. Two participants were interviewed in Berlin, Germany, one in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the rest were from Montreal, Canada. The seven Montreal participants were recruited using a snowball method and flyers posted within student associations from high schools, CEGEPs and universities around the Montreal area. The two Berlin participants were recruited from a weekly gathering at a mosque. The Copenhagen participant was recruited via word of mouth. Participants were

explained the nature of the study, its purpose, duration as well as potential consequences.

We used open-ended questions flexibly in a semi-structured format, adapting to the demands of the individual context; questions were used primarily to promote a two-way dialogue to explore key themes that emerged as we conversed. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. Participants were questioned to first define their identity as they see it, followed by a discussion of specific social identities including, but not limited to, religious, ethnic and national identities. They were subsequently asked to describe how these social identities developed, striking a divide between their experiences before, during and after their conversion. Thematic content analysis was used to identify, analyze and report thematic patterns within the data according to the qualitative nature of this research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A contextualized approach to the themes simultaneously appreciates how individuals make meanings of their experiences, and how social environments establish the range in which meanings are made. We explored and listed both themes related to our research objective, as well as those that are not. The primary author chose several key themes relevant to the discussion of national identity development among Western Muslim converts.

From identity conflicts to identity resolutions

All of our Muslim converts deeply contemplated their identity prior to conversion, though not all experienced dramatic changes in their social identity configuration afterwards. Indeed, three of our ten convert participants were far more preoccupied with the immediate repercussions of their conversion, such as the painful rejection of disapproving families and friends. For these participants, their narratives lacked the thematic centrality of the national identity as related by the remaining seven

participants. Among the seven, Katerina, Rodrigo and Mark in particular related great difficulties negotiating their pre-Muslim identities. Their narratives reveal ambivalence towards both their national or ethnic identities, unable to ascribe themselves fully to one or the other. Katerina is a 24-year old Ukrainian whose family migrated to Berlin when she was two. Discussing her social identities growing up, she was especially adamant about not feeling any attachments towards her German or Ukrainian affiliations, admitting having “*a stronger inclination towards the Asian social identity prior to my conversion.*” When asked why she dismissed her German and Ukrainian identities in favor of an Asian identity, Katerina responded:

Katerina: Once I had more contact with them, I was able to identify myself with Asian cultures much more, because I used to see myself in a lot of their traditions. I don't have any contact with them anymore, but I can identify myself with them because I can relate to their culture, their traditions, their music food and life philosophies, etc. [...] Specifically, the communal emphasis interested me very much. The core of humanity is the family unit which the Western world is always neglecting more and more. The focus here [in the Western world] is more on the individual.

This quote highlights a thread that is both explicitly and implicitly interwoven into Katerina’s narrative. She argues here that the German approach to life clashes with her basic values, finding a sense of belonging in community-oriented philosophies instead. Katerina’s conversion to Islam thus reflects the same communal component she discovered within the Asian identity, established upon a defiance towards the individualized outlooks of Western countries: ‘*German culture doesn't have that togetherness anymore*’. As such, although she later affirms that Islam encourages Muslims to actively participate in their social environment, this thought appears to be a natural extension of her social consciousness which she had before accepting Islam. In the following excerpt, Katerina laments how certain Muslim women stay at home:

Katerina: *[After conversion,] I would really want to go out and do something productive with my time; help others. You know, help others, so you can really show non-Muslims who you really are, so when they see you with a headscarf and they would be like “oh, you know [the Muslims] are really nice and they’re very helpful and the women don’t just stay at home, and they’re really nice” which makes them question then what Islam really is. Especially non-Muslims; I really want to clear people’s misconceptions.*

Thus, one of the driving forces behind Katerina’s prosocial attitude is her desire to combat common misconceptions about Muslim women. She employs the headscarf, a religious symbol and a common artifact of political controversy, as a means to advertise how upright Muslims can be. In other words, Katerina’s conversion to Islam was accompanied by the responsibility to rectify the public image of the faith. Accordingly, Katerina’s attitude towards Germany and her national identity changed as well:

Katerina: *Here you can really show who you are, you know, non-Muslims see you with a veil and it’s like “oh, you know, she’s really nice and she’s very helpful, and no, she’s not just somebody at home who just cleans” to really show them who Muslims really are. I really want to clear people’s misconceptions. Especially women, praying a little here and cleaning a little there, it’s not for me [...]. I understand as a woman I have the right to stay home and do whatever I want, sure, but if you have some free time, why don’t you go and do something with it?*

Katerina explains that once she converted in Abu Dhabi, she felt constricted in her potential to express her Muslim identity. Germany, she argues on the other hand, facilitated this expression. Thus, Katerina shifted her attitude towards her national identity almost completely. Whereas Katerina’s pre-conversion narrative readily

disparaged Germany and its values, her post-conversion narrative celebrated its openness and opportunity to express her Muslim identity as she sees fit. Thus, through the need to defend the image of Muslim women in public discourse, Katerina's understanding of the Muslim identity ironically reconfigured her attitude towards her national identity altogether.

Unlike Katerina, Ronaldo, a 23-year old Brazilian born in Montreal, was not socially conscious prior to conversion. In fact, he rejected his Canadian environment altogether, revealing how '*before converting to Islam, I did not see myself as Canadian.*' Ronaldo perceived his affiliations to his national and ethnic identities as either/or, opting rather for the Brazilian identity: '*Although I love my Brazilian roots and I'm very attached to Brazil, but I'm realizing more and more that my Brazilian identity is becoming weaker - especially after becoming Muslim. Nationalism [towards Brazil] was very big before becoming Muslim.*' Rodrigo admits having hated life in Canada, despite having never lived anywhere else, finding minimum-wage jobs to finance his return to Brazil for the summer. Rodrigo's conversion reversed his affiliation to his Canadian identity however, similarly to Katerina:

Rodrigo: Now being Canadian for me is the status I enjoy because I have the documentation to prove it; I live here and as such I feel like I'm Canadian. I pay taxes here, I live here, I interact with people here, you know, I studied here. [...] Being Muslim by default means a bunch of things, but one of those is that you contribute in your society. [...] After I became Muslim, I realize I had this opportunity to do good and increase the well-being of humanity and those around you. In the end, I always remember that the best of you are those who are the best to Allah's [God's] creation.

Rodrigo goes on to describe how his civic engagement increased dramatically post-conversion, which appears to be related to the development of his Muslim identity.

Indeed, Ronaldo sees this growth as a function of knowledge acquisition; the more he learned about the significance of ‘doing good unto others’ from his Muslim friends, the more he internalized this dynamic into his own personal ambitions. However, besides underlining Islamic injunctions for civic engagement, Rodrigo likewise asserts his responsibility to contest prevalent negative representations of Islam in media discourse: *It's also very important for me as a Muslim to prove that we, as Muslims, are much more than what all these people are saying out there; to walk strong, and be the bearer of the flag of Islam in a positive way.* Here, Ronaldo defines a Muslim as one who carries the “flag of Islam,” i.e. portrays themselves as Muslim to others in a manner that portrays their religion in a positive light. His intention is to fight the negative Muslim stereotypes that prevail in society today. This ambition has become integral to how he sees himself as a Muslim thereby reinvigorating his national identity, in contrast to his anti-nationalistic sentiments prior to conversion.

Mark, a convert of Persian and Armenian heritage, shared similar difficulties in relating to his national identity, neglecting it entirely in his pre-conversion description of his social identities. Like Katerina and Rodrigo however, Mark’s social identity configuration changed after converting to Islam:

Mark: I think I felt more Canadian after becoming Muslim, because I was more aware of my surroundings and my community and I kind of adopted the Canadian citizenship in that way after becoming Muslim. Before, even though I was a “citizen” in Canada, I didn't care about my environment, I didn't care about my locality. I cared about Iran way more than I cared about Canada. Whereas when I became Muslim, I started caring much more about my environment, and my locality, where I am and where I want to be, but more as citizenship. You know, I'm a citizen of Canada, a productive member of society, I want to contribute, I

want to participate, I want to, you know, have my voice heard, so on and so forth. [...] Although it's hard to say now, but yeah, I've kind of become more Canadian.

While Mark admits his Canadian identity became stronger post-conversion, he says this is not itself a product of being Canadian. Indeed, Mark adds that he would feel obligated to be of benefit to his society wherever he is; the nation-state itself has no bearing on his national identity development or his sense of duty towards it. Instead, he argues, this reinvigorated outlook of his Canadian identity is associated with the need of having his ‘voice heard’ as a Muslim convert. Extrapolating upon this, Mark shares Katerina and Rodrigo’s insistence in portraying the ideal Muslim image, thereby challenging derogatory, ethnocentric stereotypes of Muslims in public discourse.

Converting experiences of discrimination

Quan, Alexander and Jacob also experienced identity conflicts prior to conversion, theirs however exacerbated by instances of discrimination. Quan is a 21-year-old student born to Vietnamese parents in Montreal, Quebec. Discussing his national identity growing up, he says it was difficult feeling Quebecois due to the discrimination he experienced towards his Vietnamese heritage. Ironically, he then adds, discrimination made it difficult to associate with his Vietnamese identity as well: “*I started seeing Asians in a certain light, which made me disassociate myself from it.*” Quan admits this made him feel all the more antagonistic towards Quebec as a result.

Quan: Regarding being Quebecois, I never recognized myself among Quebecois. [...] Quebecois are very nationalistic, but as a Vietnamese-Quebecois, I saw myself as different. Do I really support Quebec, or am I

being forced to? With regards to the Asian identity, I don't recognize myself in it. So, I was always in between the two; am I Vietnamese, or Quebecois?

Quan reveals feeling trapped in a dichotomy of ethnic and national identities, unable to disassociate himself from either of them. He experienced relief from this trap upon the acceptance of the Muslim identity however. For Quan, conversion relinquished him from the burden of his national/ethnic identity incompatibility by providing him with an alternative social identity that rendered them compatible: “*My whole life I've never, never found anybody who thought like me, and then I found Islam and I said, subhanallah [‘Glory be to God’], I found something that answers all my questions*”. He then adds: “[I] never think about it as the Asian Vietnamese identity, and the Muslim identity, and the Quebecois identity. I understand and see myself in all three. But one is stronger than the others”. Thus, converting to Islam allowed Quan to view his Quebecois and Vietnamese social identities in a new light, removing from them the significance of their national and ethnic undertones. Nationalism and ethnicity, it seems, no longer seemed important to him.

Alexander, a 23-year-old born in East Berlin to a Greek father and German mother, shares many of Quan’s experiences. Prior to accepting Islam, Alexander relates how he felt at odds with his German identity, despite the fact that he was born and raised in Berlin:

Alexander: “*Previously, I had difficulties seeing myself as a German even though I'm German; I used to always try to present myself as Greek. So, I would try to speak in Greek with my dad, always wear Greek T-shirts, etc. I would often get picked on because there weren't many immigrants in the DDR, but I used to enjoy being picked on for that. I felt like I was somebody special - I was half-Greek. And not like them because they were German.*”

Alexander acutely highlights the times he was singled out for being an ethnic minority, developing a disdain for his German identity. Eventually, despite his limited relationship to Greece, Alexander proudly and exclusively identified himself as Greek. However, like the others, Alexander's national identity changed upon the acceptance of the Muslim identity:

Alexander: "These identity conflicts I had before, they all went to the background without any conflict, and the Muslim one came up front, and the Muslim can exist as a German, the Muslim can exist as a Greek, the Muslim can exist as a Russian, etc. It can always exist. Nationalities are always secondary."

Alexander acknowledges here how his conversion to Islam relegated his identity conflicts 'to the background.' As a result, he now realises his lifelong Greek/German identity conflicts were absurd, relating how such national and ethnic boundaries are ultimately man-made. Islam takes precedence, he argues, and thus see no qualms in identifying himself as German or Greek. Ironically, Alexander argues he appreciates his German identity now more than ever. He reveals that he is grateful to be German, as the country provides innumerable liberties that allow him to practice his religious identity. He says he feels this way despite Germany's discriminatory attitude towards Muslims:

Alexander: "On the other hand, it's difficult to live in a society that consists of citizens who primarily do not trust Islam, sometimes hate, but mostly distrust. They mock my prophet saying he's a pedophile, who see my religion as a religion which oppresses women; this discussion I have very often with my mother, good discussions, not bad discussions, good discussions because she didn't have any knowledge on the subject and I was able to explain it to her. Sometimes it can be a little strenuous but this is our responsibility. I'm thankful for this present, that I'm Muslim."

But I have now the responsibility to live here, the responsibility to educate the society and influence them in the best possible way as an individual or as a group, just like the companions of the Prophet."

This marks a shift in Alexander's perception of discrimination, which previously provoked a rejection of the German identity. Conflicts between ethnicity and nationalism which overwhelmed his identity development are remnants of the past. Now, in lieu of the distress which normally accompanied his experiences of discrimination, there is responsibility: to educate others about Islam.

Jacob, born to a Danish father and a Ghanaian mother, prefacing his narrative by relating how lenient Danes are on issues of racial discrimination. Denmark, he argues, lacks the equivalent of the American civil rights movement:

Jacob: "However, me and my friends who share the same background, we felt very discriminated because of [the racial slurs], we just don't show it [laughter]. But we do feel it. But the reason why we don't show it, is because again, another element that many of us didn't really, couldn't relate to, the so-called freedom of speech, that there are no limits to what you can say, and what you can't say. One of my good friends, he's half Tanzanian and half Danish, he's Christian, and even though he's born here in Denmark and he grew up here, he told me something I could relate to, no matter how hard he tried to comply with Danish customs, their way of speaking Danish, he still couldn't, you know, meet the full satisfaction of what it would take to be a full Dane."

After a life of being discriminated against because of his skin color, Jacob firmly believes visible minorities will never be seen on equal footing as white Danes: "*You know, I remember when I started school in Denmark, I was always reminded of my color, and the way I talked, and the way my parents aren't fully Danish, and for some*

reason I felt a slight exclusion from being Danish." Jacob explains how his national identity was regularly dismissed as a function of his skin color, thus he never felt Danish prior to his conversion. Significantly, his formulation of the Danish identity at this point is entirely rooted in racial connotations. After his conversion however, his perceptions of the Danish identity changed drastically. He shares the following thoughts when discussing how his religious and Muslim identities intersect:

"Freedom of expression, you see in Islam we also have [this concept]. As the Prophet said, one of the best forms of struggle is to speak the truth to a tyrant. And, you know, I would say that many Danes would appreciate such a principle." Jacob goes on to elaborate on Danish culture, underlining many of its compatibilities with Islamic values. The notion here of compatibility and shared values is emphasized. For Jacob, his conversion to Islam established a framework in which the significance of the Danish identity evolved from wholly racial to a network of values seeking reconciliation with his religious faith. He later argues that the construction of the Muslim identity should ultimately reflect the position of a good Danish citizen first and foremost. Thus, through Islam, the Danish identity became the principal vehicle to challenge normative formulations of 'Danishness', while simultaneously fulfilling his responsibility of portraying Islam in the best possible light.

Discussion

Converting to Islam not only addressed the identity conflicts for many of our participants, but indeed changed their perception of their social identities entirely. As ethnic minorities, Katerina, Rodrigo and Mark initially dismissed their national identities altogether, due in part to feelings of distance and incompatibility, but then reinvigorated them upon conversion. For Quan, Alexander and Jacob, their conversion meant absolving themselves entirely from a perceived national identity trapped within the binary framework of race and nationalism. For all participants,

their national identity ultimately became the most convenient means to educate others about their faith, shouldering the responsibility of showcasing the ideal Western Muslim citizen. Our results thus highlight the implications of socio-political contexts in the acquisition and development of the Muslim identity. We argue when our participants converted to Islam, they not only accepted the Muslim identity within a framework of theology, but demonstrated a consciousness of the socio-political dimensions of the Muslim identity as embedded within Western contexts. The following is a discussion of two of these dimensions – increasing islamophobia and racial discrimination - and how they inadvertently shape a convert's social identity configuration.

Western Muslim migrant descendants are increasingly developing their religious identity in response to negative representation of Islam in Western media and public discourse (Modood et al., 2002). As we have seen with our convert participants, a great deal of their effort is also dedicated to disparaging the negative representation of Islam as well. In this defensive state, their national identity necessarily develops in a manner which is most concordant with *dawah* (a formulation of missionarism in Islam) whose purpose is to correct the negative representations of Islam in public discourse (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004). Converts especially feel the burden to bridge the gap between Western society and Islam, thus claiming a greater responsibility of displaying righteous behaviours in public space (Oestergaard, 2009). By reversing their relationship towards their national identity and publicly upholding it, our converts draw upon the political agency necessary for social change. As such, they carefully negotiate their religious and national identities in a manner which affirms their compatibility. Both Western Muslim migrant descendants and converts thus affirm the harmony between State-Muslim identities to enable a greater capacity for activism in mainstream society (Werbner, 2000). This in turn explains the increase in civic engagement among Arab-American Muslims post-9/11, who aspired to change the social image of Islam in public discourse

(Witteborn, 2007). In other words, the Western Muslim identity itself is implicitly embedded political undertones to affirm the place of Muslims in Western society. It is worth mentioning that our Muslim convert participants may have not originally intended on developing their national identity when converting to Islam, or perceived their conversion as a political maneuver in terms of civic engagement. Nonetheless, upon accepting the Muslim identity as a theological transformation, converts inadvertently enter this State-Muslim community polemic as well. Their narratives relate how political realities translate in the development of the Muslim identity, thus necessitating a revaluation of their national identity. This reflects the analysis of Özyürek (2014), who relates how Germany's political discourse is reflected in how German converts reconstruct their German identity as a political maneuver. As such, in order to understand how converts change their attitudes towards their national identities, it is important to contextualize their conversion within the particular socio-political dimensions of the Western Muslim identity. This affirms the concordance between social identities in that the national and religious identities mutually constitute one another, even should Western Muslims insist on their division (Younis & Hassan, in press).

The European conceptualization of the Muslim identity is also intimately linked to notions of race (Rogozen□Soltar, 2012). Unsurprisingly, experiences of racial discrimination were significant in the Muslim identity acquisition and development of some of our participants. According to them, racial discrimination had political connotations which developed a substantial aversion towards one's national identity. While discrimination may not have been integral to the process of conversion, it nevertheless played a role in how converts then related to their national affiliation afterwards. Malcolm X is often regarded among converts as the quintessential symbol of overcoming the prominent role of race, relegating race and nationalism to the background (SpearIt, 2012). Conversion to Islam doubles then as an affirmation of their right to reconstruct their national identity as a form of protest and social

critique, disrupting the normative understanding of race as central to the national identity (Özyürek, 2014; Viswanathan, 1998). This was apparent with Quan, Alexander and Jacob who diminished the significance of their ethnic and racial identities after converting, but nonetheless affirmed a novel relationship to their national identity in hope of producing positive social change. The emphasis on and implications of racial polemics does differ according to socio-political context (Galonnier, 2015). For example, white converts are treated more respectfully by other Muslims than non-white converts in some British Muslim communities (Moosavi, 2015). As such, race cannot be avoided in the discussion of converts, elucidating their attraction towards Islam's anti-racial, anti-nationalistic attitude, especially among Salafi movements (Özyürek, 2014). As we have seen with several of our participants, converting to Islam did not lead them to endorse their national identity; rather, it restructured their perspective in a manner which disrobed it of its racial and nationalistic significance.

Conclusion

Converts provide a rare opportunity to observe a change in the perception and configuration of social identities without it being necessarily a factor of migration or change of environment. One of the limitations in our research is that all of our convert participants were recruited from within Muslim student associations and educational lectures at local mosques. Thus, it is possible that their narratives reflect organizational commitments towards their associations and mosques, which may provide official accounts of how to address national and religious identity polemics (Jeldtoft, 2011). This did not appear to be the case however. The converts discussed in this article experienced profound identity conflicts before becoming Muslim, some of which were instigated by instances of discrimination. Their social identity configuration transformed however upon conversion, ultimately reversing their national affiliation. Again, not all narratives related this transformation in their social

identity configuration, as three participants were preoccupied primarily with the immediate social ramifications of their conversion. The seven remaining converts however demonstrate how political contexts, experiences of discrimination and race are all significantly implicated in the process of religious identity development. Understanding how these elements play a role before and after conversion will illuminate the challenges that Muslim converts experience.

Future research should explore the processes which contributed to these results, taking reasons for conversion into consideration. In addition, the narratives of these converts shed light on the significance of family, friends and political contexts in the process of religious and national identity development. Prospective research should also consider how the racial and ethnic components factor in the development of the religious identity post-conversion. With Muslims coming increasingly under suspicion in Western countries, it has become necessary to appreciate how Muslim converts are traversing these socio-political climates, and how their identities are shaped accordingly.

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CHAPITRE V

ARTICLE IV

Contextualising Article 4

This article examines the relationship between a Western Muslim's religious and national identities highlighted in articles 1, 2 and 3. The observation that both religious and national identities develop in tandem according to socio-political contexts begs the question how social identities are related. As such, the following article explores their relationship by addressing the two most prevalent identity models employed with Western Muslims: the bicultural and acculturation models. The analyses of the previous articles hint at the possibility that religious and national identities of Western Muslims are intimately related. After all, if the socio-political context sets the foundation for the development of the religious identity, it follows that the national identity's development must somehow be related. This would remain true even if a Western Muslim would argue their religious and national identities conflict. The article thus opens the door to understanding and depicting the theoretical formulation of multicultural individuals (or individuals with multiple cultural identities) from another light, beyond the binary scope of bicultural and acculturation theories.

Title

Second-generation Western Muslims: A Qualitative Analysis of Multiple Social Identities

Abstract

The relationship among social identities is significant when discussing the various identity negotiations of Muslims in Western contexts. We explore the identity narratives of second-generation Muslim young adults as a function of the dominant theoretical models employed with this group in psychological research: the bicultural identity and acculturation theories. Taking a constructivist position towards the theoretical foundations of these models, we question how second-generation Muslim young adults negotiate their social identities in light of their unique life course trajectories. The sample is composed of 20 Muslim young adults from Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen of diverse ethnicities and backgrounds. This article focuses on two major themes underlying second-generation identity development: the precedence of experience to social identities and the enmeshment of multiple social identities. We then discuss the results of our findings in light of the complex nature of social identity, group membership and political categorization.

Keywords: identity development; cultural identity; Muslim; multiple identities

Introduction

Publications concerning the North American Muslim population have increased ten-fold in the decade post-9/11, in comparison to the preceding decade (Amer and Bagasare, 2013). According to the Amer and Bagasare (2013), nearly 26% of these studies relate to topics of intergroup relations and identity/acculturation. As such, there is a marked interest in the identity development of Muslims in Western countries. Within the field of identity, Western Muslims are often studied for the impact of widespread discrimination on their subjective well-being, as well as the interaction of their national and religious identities (Amer and Bagasare, 2013). The latter in particular is a political artifact due to the increased influx of Muslim migrants, where receiving countries question their capacity for social integration (Rytter & Pedersen, 2014). Furthermore, the subject of identity is still widely debated within the social sciences (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Jenkins 2014). Social psychology divides identity into two over-arching elements, namely personal identity and social identity. A social identity essentially covers our group membership; the characteristics we share with others in our group give us a sense of commonality (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tajfel, 1981; Jenkins, 2014). This commonality can be characterized by language, religion, ancestry, ethnicity and citizenship – its role serves as a reference group within our self-concept (Baker, 2010; Hendry, Mayer and Kloep, 2007; Jenkins, 2014).

While ethnic minorities are understood to possess several social identities, our understanding of how social identities interact remains obscure (Phinney and Devich-Navarro, 1997). In addition, despite the increased interest in researching Western Muslims, publications on Western second-generation Muslim youth identity development are lacking, and the research methodologies of those that exist vary widely (Sirin and Balsano, 2007). Specifically, little is known about how second-generation Muslim youth view their national identities in Western contexts (Thomas

and Sanderson, 2011). Among the few studies available, we found that bicultural identity and acculturation models were most often employed - at least conceptually - with second-generation Muslims in psychological research (e.g. Sirin and Fine, 2007; Britto and Amer, 2007; Zaal, Salah and Fine, 2007). The acculturation model predicts that individuals who strongly identify with both their cultural and national identities will experience a greater sense of well-being (Berry et. al, 2006). The bicultural identity model on the other hand suggests that the perceived conflict between the cultural and national identities best predicts psychological well-being – better identity integration presumes lower internal conflict (Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2005). While some studies may not explicitly refer to either model, they nevertheless employ similar frameworks by evaluating an individual's multiple social identities for compatibility and affiliation strength (e.g. Verkuyten, Thijs and Stevens, 2012). The purpose of this article is to examine the theoretical applicability of these models with second-generation Muslims.

The Muslim social identity

Social psychological studies often employ bicultural and acculturation identity models for Muslim youth, exploring effects of discrimination and identity conflict (Sirin and Fine, 2007; Holtz, Dahinden and Wagner, 2013; Hutchinson et. al, 2015), gender (Ozyurt, 2013; Mizra, 2013) and family dynamics (Verkuyten, Thijs and Stevens, 2012). These models are applied on the premise that second-generation Muslims are recipients of ethnic and religious heritage inherited by their parents. It is presumed that incidence of conflict (i.e. discrimination) in Western countries may result in multiple, incompatible identities among Muslim youth, with explicit boundaries delineating national and religious identities (Zine, 2001). Indeed, psychological well-being is found to be correlated to identity conflict among Muslims who experience discrimination (Sirin and Fine, 2007; Zaal, Salah and Fine,

2007). This echoes other minority research, which found that negative psychological outcomes are associated with a multicultural individual's incapacity to act in accordance to both cultural worlds they are affiliated with (David, Okazaki, & Saw, 2009).

However, there are some caveats employing bicultural and acculturation identity models with Muslim second-generation youth. First, the acculturation and bicultural identity models were developed primarily for first generation migrants, and Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) underline the lack of research demonstrating applicability with descendants. Indeed, research suggests descendants often traverse significantly different integration pathways (Alba and Nee, 1997). Second, the characterization of a Muslim identity is itself a subject of debate, often confounding ethnicity, culture and religion (Said, 1994). In turn, the terminologies used to recruit Muslim participants differ greatly between studies (Amer and Bagasare, 2013). Third, our understanding of how multiple identities relate to one another – what is the nature of their interaction within an individual - remains a mystery (Ramarajan, 2014). These and other concerns demand different methods in approaching the identity development of Western Muslims, beyond the binary scopes of acculturation and bicultural identity models. Ali (2014), for example, offers an account of Muslim social identities based on life-history interviews, revealing how North American Muslims youth experience the negative portrayal of Islam in public discourse. Employing social representations as a theoretical foundation, Sartawi and Sammut (2012) provide an ethnographic account of bicultural Muslim-British identities. They depict how diverging meaning systems of the Muslim and British identities produce conflict within the implicit moments of everyday life. Similarly, Ozyrut (2013) explores how Muslim women in the Netherlands and the United States construct a self-narrative amid their religious and national identities. She uses narrative analysis to investigate how her participants give meaning to their experiences, reflecting both their individuality as well as the environment around them. Ozyrut (2013) finds that

successful negotiation of religious and national identities depends on the ability to process a coherent self-narrative in which these women felt a part of both worlds. She argues that the actual compatibility between two cultural identities itself was less impactful, referring here to normative bicultural and acculturation theories.

Our research takes a constructivist position along the lines of Ozyrut (2013), assessing the cultural narratives Muslim youth employ to define who they are within particular sociopolitical environments. However, digressing from Ozyurt, we favored an inductive analysis of our qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006) as opposed to the theoretical imposition of *a priori* frameworks of the bicultural identity and acculturation models. Thus our research looked at the life narratives of second-generation Muslim young adults with the intention of exploring the various social identities they may have, guided by the following question: how do second-generation Muslim young adults negotiate their social identities in light of their unique life course trajectories? We extrapolate and discuss two major themes from the narratives pertinent to identity development: the precedence of experience to social identities and the enmeshment of multiple social identities. We then discuss our findings in light of the complex relationships between social identity, group membership and political categorization within the inherent fluidity of identity development.

Methodology

Participants, socio-political contexts and procedure

The participants were composed of Muslim youth from Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen. There was a total of 30 participants - fifteen male and fifteen female – within an age range of 18 to 25; ten participants from each city, respectively. Ten of

the participants were converts however, thus this study only took the remaining 20 interviews of second-generation Muslims into consideration. Participants were recruited by word of mouth from youth groups as well as student associations, high schools, colleges, universities and Sunni mosques. The majority of the participants were undergraduate students (or recent graduates), with a small number having just completed high school. The ethnicities of the participants varied widely, as we did not want our results to reflect any one particular migrant heritage. Participants in Berlin and Copenhagen were recruited in the summer of 2012, and Montreal participants in the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013.

The political media attention of the three countries were thematically similar; Islam was often referred to as a point of controversy, which seemed salient in the minds of the participants. In Germany at the time, the federal president Christian Wulff stated ‘Islam belongs to Germany,’ which other politicians rejected, creating a political media controversy concerning the federal outlook on Islam. In Denmark, there was a public debate regarding the ‘halal’ slaughter of animals and its legitimacy in Danish culture. Furthermore, some participants raised issue with Pia Kjærsgaard - leader of the Danish People’s Party at the time, Denmark’s third largest party - who professed that being Danish is the feeling ‘that one is happy to be Danish’, and ‘perhaps not so happy being Pakistani or Romanian’. Finally, the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper suggested the greatest threat to Canada is ‘Islamicism’ in 2011, which resonated with some participants a year later. Within Quebec in particular, there was a controversy that ‘halal’ meat was being sold to citizens without their knowledge. Furthermore, public debates regarding the place of *niqab* (a face cover for Muslim women) in Quebec society were being held. Ultimately however, the most significant socio-political element impacting the narratives of the participants is one they all shared: the war on terror. They complained of the tenacious sensationalism surrounding Muslims in the media, which they felt portrays Islam in a negative light. Many felt that foreign and domestic policies are closely related, and public media

vernacular made little effort in distinguishing between the usage and ascription of ‘Islam’ to terrorists and Western Muslims alike.

A qualitative interview guide was developed and validated by the ethics supervision committee with open-ended questions used flexibly in a semi-structured format. We adapted the interview guide to the demands of each context and participant, promoting a non-threatening two-way dialogue. Interviews were held in the time and place of the participant’s choice to ensure comfort, and to avoid the possibility that predetermined settings (e.g. a mosque) may impact the discussion. As such, interview settings varied widely between homes, university classrooms and mosques. An interpreter was present during Danish interviews in case participants requested a translator; the primary author speaks fluent English, German, French and Arabic. In light of each participant’s unique identity development, and according to the constructivist position, the questions were open-ended. Thus, the interviews always began with a general questioning of their social identities without insisting that they ascribe themselves to any particular social identity besides Muslim (the recruitment criterion). Our initial questions were as follows: “How do you identify yourself?” Thereupon, we specifically discussed the various social identities to which they affiliate. Taking a life-course approach, we not only detailed their affiliation to social identities, but underscored more precisely their unique, experiential developments: “How have you come to see yourself as a [Muslim/German/Pakistani]?” We discussed the intelligibility of each social identity, asking the participants how they learned to describe themselves in such a manner. We then delved into the details of their identity negotiations, should the participants offer such narratives. Finally, we explored how their self-esteem and perceived well-being fluctuated according to each social identity development, as well as their interactions.

Qualitative analysis strategy

The research methodology was qualitative in accordance with the objectives, utilizing a thematic content analysis to investigate the data. Thematic content analysis is considered the foundational method for qualitative research (Braun and Clark, 2006). Its goal is to identify, analyze and report patterns within data, thereby organizing the data in a way that illustrates its richness. Reviews of thematic analysis highlight the lack of details concerning the selection of themes in qualitative studies, many of whom state that the themes simply ‘emerge’ from the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thus, based upon Braun and Clark’s (2006) advice, this article will attempt to acknowledge our theoretical positions by recognizing each theme as a decision, as well as clarify its selection.

A contextualized approach established the theoretical framework of our thematic analysis. The contextualized method appreciates how individuals make meanings of their own experience, as well as how social contexts impact the extents to which these meanings can be made. In other words, it “works to both reflect reality, and to pick and unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (Braun & Clark, 2006). To do this, we followed several guidelines as per Braun & Clark’s (2006) advice. First, we provided a rich description of the entire data set. Then, patterns within the data set were explored both thematically as well as inductively. In other words, although we searched for specific themes throughout the data set, we also considered themes that are unrelated to our research objectives. Finally, we approached the data set on both latent as well as semantic levels. In light of the range of topics – such as identity, social influences, etc., all well within the scope of a young adult’s understanding – there is much to be taken at face value, hence the semantic level. Nevertheless, more complicated dynamics, such as the relationship between social identities, may not be expressed as overtly, thus a certain level of understanding was required from our part to appreciate the latent meanings of what is said.

We produced a verbatim account of all verbal utterances due to the conversational nature of the interviews, giving particular attention to proper use of punctuation in order to properly capture rhetoric (Braun & Clark, 2006). Once the transcription process was complete, we immersed ourselves in the interview through repeated active readings, searching for patterns and meanings. The coding process was both ‘theory-driven’, with our specific research questions in mind, as well as ‘data-driven’, to remain conscious of significant pieces of information seemingly unrelated to our objectives. Afterwards, we sorted out the different codes within broader themes. Analyses were then written for individual themes, not only highlighting what each theme illustrates individually, but also tying them into the overall research objectives. The primary author then selected several key themes pertinent to the discussion of social identity development.

Results

Experiences precede social identities

The first theme we observed was the manner in which participants gave primacy to personal experiences when recounting the development of their social identities. The social identities of these young adults then took the form of their experiences situated within particular contexts and socio-political environments. Michael and Danial both give examples of this.

Michael was born in Denmark to an Iraqi father and Indian mother. Notwithstanding his parents’ ethnic differences in practicing Islam, the various ethnic groups in Michael’s largely immigrant neighbourhood confounded his understanding of the Muslim identity even more. Michael thus describes his identity development as confusing, not only reflecting the different iterations of the Muslim identity around

him, but also how he was treated by Danes growing up (incidentally, the fact that his parents gave him an European name did not make matters any easier). While discussing the Muslim social identity, he shares an experience in 2005 relating to the Danish cartoon crisis, in which the Prophet Mohamed was caricatured in a newspaper:

Michael: *"I remember how at one point I did something that I still repent for to this day; you know, I was very young during the Danish cartoon crisis and I was walking around with other Muslims, they were trouble-makers if you know what I mean. They just wanted to create trouble, just for the fun of it. They kick up dust for no reason. I remember clearly: they wanted me to act hostile with them. I didn't feel like doing that, but they wanted me to, and I feel like it was a life-changing moment; at that point they were like burning cars - you've never seen Copenhagen in the state as it was in that time. And I remember one older brother [‘brother’ signifies here a relationship based on shared religiosity, rather than actual filiation], he told me clearly “if you really love the Prophet, then come out and wreak havoc with us,” and I was like I don't have to prove that to you.” “But if you want to hang with us, that's what you got to do.” So finally I was like, “OK, let's try it, let's go with them.” And my father was really against all of that. I remembered this older brother he gave me a bottle, it was a Molotov cocktail, and he was like “throw it!” and in the moment I threw it and nothing happened – it just hit the ground and started a fire – and I remember looking at it and telling myself “I don't ever want to do something like that again. I don't need you guys. Don't ever come back to me again and make me do these type of things.” But that changed my perception of who I should hang out with; it didn't affect the way I perceived Islam as a whole."*

Michael depicts how the cartoon crisis established the circumstances in which he negotiated the values within the Muslim social identity. Here, for example, the socio-political environment in Denmark appeared to be threatening for Muslims, and the Muslim youth in Michael's story responded accordingly by developing a clear, reactive value within the social identity, "if you love the prophet, you will rebel against the state." This reaction seems to be deeply interconnected with the image of the prophet Mohamed being violated within a context in which Western Muslims have experienced discrimination on a massive scale (Barkdull et al., 2011).

Danial, born to Albanian parents in Copenhagen, shares a different process through which his Muslim identity was established. Questions relating to his understanding of the Muslim identity instigates the following discussion:

Interviewer: Besides your friends, was there anything else in your environment that affected your understanding of your Muslim identity?

Danial: My basic understanding of what Islam was, was what I was taught. By asking a question like that, you are risking turning Islam into a subjective answer. But Islam can't just be defined based on how people want it. Some people are practicing correctly and some people are practicing incorrectly.

Interviewer: If you're saying there's a right and wrong way, what's to judge [what the right way is]?

Danial: Defining Islam in reality, some Muslims have accepted so many Western values, where Islam is only practiced in the home, whereas the real Islam, you practice the duties. You figure these out by researching

Islam through the Quran and the ahadith [prophetic narrations]. But we have people who don't trust in Islam, and they research other things.

Danial then admits “*I was raised to believe that my Islam was correct. My main source of knowledge was my dad and my mom.*” Here, Danial denies the potential of a personal, subjective understanding of Islam, professing adamantly that there is only one authentic depiction of the Muslim identity to which many Muslims do not abide. However, Danial inadvertently discloses that his very understanding of Islam is personal and homegrown, underlining the inherent contradiction that his objective enactment of the Muslim identity is in fact established upon the values he has received from his experiences with his parents.

Enmeshed identities

We also observed how social identities mutually constituted one another. Salam for example, a female university student born to Syrian parents in Copenhagen, stated that by reading the Quran “*where it says be respectful of others, I'm fulfilling not only the Islamic side, but the German and Arab side as well.*” Such depictions question the theoretical boundaries segregating social identities. Indeed, examining social identities individually at times evoked random and contradictory descriptions. Yousuf is a male university student born and raised in Berlin to an Egyptian father and a half-German, half-Lebanese mother. While discussing his social identities, he describes the German identity as follows:

Yousuf: [The German identity] means punctuality, it means beer, it means curry wurst, it means scientists, it means worldly knowledge, it means racism, it means a dark history, it means... Soccer... (Laughter)... German means cold... But they also show that they are warm... So I guess... I don't know, it's difficult because... I think Germany is starting

to shift its identity, one cannot really categorize a German identity, per se.

Yousuf's depiction of the German identity appears confused, gathering characteristics that are both stereotypical, like dietary habits, but also random, such as the German's emphasis on worldly knowledge. Taking his narrative as a whole however, this description appears to be fundamentally established upon his experiences of being Muslim in Germany. As such, each facet of the German identity is intimately related to his understanding of being Muslim. Sonia, a female university student from Copenhagen born to a Romanian mother and a Syrian father, relates to her national and religious identities in an equally complex manner: "*the most important thing for me is that I'm here, that my base is here, and if there's any correction needed in society I want to do it here.*" Reflecting on her Danish identity, Sonia qualifies it as a feeling of belonging which encourages civic engagement, as a function of what it means to be a prosocial Muslim. She relates this thought within the context of how she feels Denmark has treated Muslims in the past decade:

Sonia: I don't think that they never will accept [Muslims as Danes], but I think it's a development, and maybe 10 years ago they would never consider you as a Dane, but people today are actually acknowledging that you are a Dane. Even though you have your Muslim background you still contribute to society, and you are working for the benefit of society. So you are actually a Dane. But it comes in levels and we are moving in the right direction, especially the fact that a lot of Muslims have really excelled in education and positions in society, so I think 10 years from now, it will be more common or more normal to say 'That's Sonia, she's a Dane.' And it wouldn't be 'Okay, she's a Dane but a Muslim Dane.'

For Sonia, the religious identity is an active formulation of the national identity with the specific goal of combating negative stereotypes of Islam. Zeinab, also born in

Denmark but from an Iraqi household, shares Sonia's attitude towards civic engagement. When asked how she would react if someone were to question her Danish identity, she responds: "*I'd be like 'How do you measure that? You have to give me a proof. How do you measure whether I'm Danish?' Am I functioning in the society, am I contributing to the society or not, that's actually the question*". Zeinab however does not share Sonia's optimism that civic engagement will produce a society accepting of Muslims: "*Especially because I'm Muslim, this has made my interaction in Danish society a bit limited, I mean I did grow up here, but Danish society would never consider me as 100% Danish.*" Despite her ambivalence, Zeinab nevertheless underscores civic engagement as a religious practice – doing good unto others and benefitting one's surroundings - which will inevitably improve the situation for Muslims in Denmark. Both Sonia and Zeinab's reflections underscore the interconnected nature of their religious and national identities, precipitated by the environment in which they live as Danish Muslims.

Discussion

Our participants provided rich, comprehensive narratives which enlightened the complex identity development processes of second-generation Muslim young adults. Our discussions both expand upon and challenges elements of the acculturation and bicultural models often employed with second-generation Muslims. First, the precedence of experiences to the values of social identities suggests that one's personal life-course plays a significant role in the understanding of social values. Michael and Danial's diverging formulations of their Muslim identities showcase how personal experiences guide their development, thereby questioning the basic categorization of social identities employed in identity models. The Muslim identity, as all social identities, is essentially heterogeneous in nature as the participants in this study demonstrate.

Michael, for example, was tasked with the difficult challenge of having to negotiate what the Muslim social identity entails. The juxtaposition between his friends and his father symbolize conflicting images of what constitutes a ‘real’ Muslim (both father and friends directly call upon theology in their argumentation), and Michael is tasked with negotiating his allegiances accordingly as a function of these experiences. As such, the distinction between peers and parent represent a conflict embedded within the social context, experienced on an individual level. These experiences then dictate Michael’s understanding of his Muslim identity, which clearly assumes *a priori* feelings of belonging (to his father) and values of civic duty.

Danial’s insistence on objectivity in the Muslim identity, on the other hand, is not only a reaction to the many Western Muslim identities he deems as inauthentic, but also a reflection of Western society’s emphasis on objectivity. In the former, Danial strongly affirms the objectivity of his Muslim identity as the truth. At the same time, he devalues other formulations of the Muslim identity as inauthentic, relating to them as circumstantial (e.g. he refers to Muslims who cater to Islamophobia, adapting their lifestyle to appease Western society) or cultural and therefore lacking in theological credibility. Ironically, he then relates how he was raised to understand the Muslim identity in such a manner, opposing his previous emphasis on theological authenticity. Danial’s contradiction highlights his urgency for Muslims to appear as ‘authentic’ as possible in Denmark, discharging himself of his own subjectivity. His insistence on objectivity may not only be an attempt to differentiate from ‘Westernized’ Muslim identities, but also a representation of Danish society’s emphasis on objective, scientific truths. Thus, it appears that Danial’s experiences - both at home and in society - established this implicit sensibility towards authenticity, setting the bedrock for how his Muslim identity developed.

Michael and Danial’s accounts of the Muslim identity are only two examples of the diversity found in our research. Indeed, researchers have begun to question the

theoretical and practical applications of Muslim identity as a concept (Bectovic, 2011). In its complexity, Bectovic for example argues how research on Muslims “has contributed to the partial and reductionist picture of Islam, which is dominated by the formal, political and visual elements.” By pursuing Muslim organizations for example (i.e. mosques, Muslim student associations, etc.), Bectovic suggests researchers risk disregarding the non-religious elements of the Muslim identity, thereby contributing to its obscurity.

The diversity of Muslim identity formulations is the basis of the second theme we found among the participants. Significantly, most participants did not relate a narrative of alternating from one social identity to another (cultural frame-switching) according to the social context, as suggested by the bicultural model (Benet-Martinez and Haritatos, 2005). When Feride argues that being respectful to others reflects the totality of her identities, she is recounting a reality in which she was raised: the knowledge and practice of one identity reflects all other identities. Her national and religious identities are thus not integrated as acculturation and bicultural models profess as they presume the social identities were previously, in essence, separate phenomena.

The co-construction of social identities persists even when participants actively rejected their national affiliation. Yousuf, for example, when discussing the nature of being German, offered features such as ‘having scientific knowledge’, ‘eating currywurst’, and ‘bearing a dark history’. These characteristics however relate to Yousuf on a personal level. For him, the Muslim collectivity espouses values which emphasize spiritual knowledge; curry wurst (a pork sausage) is a German staple, but is also illicit for Muslims to eat; and “racism” and “dark history” may refer both to Germany’s World War legacy, but also to its current domestic policies targeting the country’s Muslim population (Bauder & Semmelroggen, 2009). Yousuf never explicitly asserted the oppositional nature of his Muslim and German identities.

Nonetheless, their co-constitution became evident when analyzing the narrative as a whole, despite his overtly ambivalent relationship towards his German identity to which he later admits: “*I guess I have to say I am German, and I'm not*”. As such, even if Yousuf assumes the position of ‘not being German’, likening the national identity to the possession of a passport (as other participants have suggested), this assessment is not an indication that the German identity has no bearing on his Muslim identity. Indeed, his appraisal of the Muslim identity not only reflects his German context as mentioned earlier but, moreover, Yousuf would not have related to his religious identity in such a manner had he not been continuously incorporating and rejecting elements of his German environment. By considering his German and Muslim identities simultaneously, it thus becomes apparent that the totality of Yousuf’s social identities is a uniquely situated whole that cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts, as the bicultural identity and acculturation models suggest.

Sonia and Zeinab’s reflections on civic engagement reflect the enmeshed nature of social identities as well. For many participants, the national identity represented the necessity to educate their society of Islam, and showcase the injustice of the political campaigns launched against it. For Sonia and Zeinab in particular, civic engagement developed as an inherent process of being Muslim in Denmark, in retaliation to a society they perceive to not only be ignorant of Islam, but more fundamentally as a response to being denied the right of being Danish. To appreciate civic engagement as a form of both national and religious practice, one cannot distinguish between the Danish and the Muslim – it reflects both identities combined. As a Muslim, they argue, their faith espouses a prosocial responsibility towards the betterment of society and advancement of the Muslim community’s rights in society. As a Danish citizen, they are uniquely situated within a European democracy which encourages this form of civic engagement. As such, both identities developed concordantly, and civic engagement is a uniquely Danish/Muslim reaction to the real and potential challenges Muslims experience in practicing their religion in Denmark. This makes

the case that the national and religious social identities were previously indistinguishable. Zeinab's narrative however sheds light upon a significant struggle, relating profound feelings of discouragement. Unlike Sonia, she is doubtful that Denmark will ever accept Muslims as Danes. Her pessimism is grounded by the thought that society will inevitably impose upon Muslims an inferior social status, irrespective of the strength of their Danish identity and commitment to civic engagement. Zeinab feels society will never fully accept her as a Muslim despite having been raised in Denmark, challenging thus the prosocial narrative of civic engagement attributed to both religious and national identities. This dissonance raises the chicken-or-the-egg dilemma if national and religious identities are separate entities seeking integration as bicultural and acculturation models profess, or if the social context is imposing fractures among second-generation Muslim youth whose social identities were experientially indistinguishable.

The co-constructed nature of social identities resembles formulations of hybridity, but goes beyond this. It reflects Bhabha's (1995) notion of hybridized subjectivity, in which second-generation Muslim youth are perpetually in a third space – not ever in one social identity or another – where different elements of their self are in constant flux and negotiation, integration and disintegration, as a function of their experiences. Bhabha thereby questions articulations of cultural homogeneity, which the bicultural and acculturation models subsume. Indeed, according to Khan (2000), Bhabha "points out that individuals construct their cultures from national as well as religious texts and transform them, often into Western forms of symbols, signifiers of technology, language and dress." The challenge then of the bicultural and acculturation models is to not only to avoid reifying cultural sameness, but to find a way to address this third space; a space which is by no means analogous to social identities fitting together like a puzzle. The abstraction of a single social identity then - be it religious, national or ethnic - is a theoretical imposition detached from the reality of the lived experiences of these participants.

We believe the two themes described in this article question the validity of applying bicultural and acculturation identity models with second-generation Western Muslims. First, the acculturation and bicultural models were developed primarily for migrant research, and researchers should remain wary of applying models developed for migrants with second-generation minorities. Second, the participants demonstrated a constant interplay of hard and soft definitions of identity when discussing their social identities. At times they emphasized the bona fide boundaries of an identity, but then quickly admitted to the endless negotiations involved in establishing transitional fundaments. Indeed, social psychological research is tasked with the conundrum involving the changing yet identical nature of social identities (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Viewing social identities as contained, individual elements dismisses the complexity and fluidity of identity development and may reify monolithic perceptions of second-generation minorities.

The third tension confounding the nature of a social identity is the interplay between groups and categories, as discussed extensively by Jenkins (2014). Although social identities imply the group affiliations to which an individual ascribes, they are just as much political categories imposed upon persons – often despite themselves. In most cases, social identities are both (Jenkins, 2014). The interviews presented a challenge to discuss a particular social identity without reifying its significance as a political entity upon the individual, as if they ought to experience ‘being Muslim’ or ‘being German’ separately. While discussing the development of social identities in these interviews, the line separating group and category was vague and elusive. Significantly, the question of “the Muslim presence in the West” has rendered the Muslim social identity salient, and the participants would often challenge the categorization while simultaneously affirming it.

Limitations

As such, a significant limitation in the study is how the recruitment process reaffirmed the politicised categorisation of Muslims. For example, our flyers explicitly underlined the recruitment of “Muslims to research social identity development.” Not surprising then that, with ‘Muslim’ as the key component of our recruitment process, only two participants presented other social identities beyond religious, ethnic and national affiliations when asked to describe themselves broadly. It was as if exploring the Muslim social identity carried an *a priori* understanding that national and ethnic identities were also in question. Thus, the recruitment process may have recapitulated a call towards the political categorization of the Muslim participants, thereby reifying the Muslim category as distinct and embedding it within a social narrative where it is expected to be compared and contrasted to national and ethnic identities.

Another limitation in the recruitment process has to do with the outcome of the recruitment process itself. Although recruitment methods were identical in all three cities, it is important to mention that the majority of participants in Berlin were recruited from three major Sunni mosques, whereas Copenhagen and Montreal found most participants via the snowball method. As such, it may be that the interviews in Berlin reflect the specific discourses found within those mosques, and of mosque attendees in general. On the other hand, the snowball method in Copenhagen and Montreal allowed for participants from diverse institutional backgrounds, levels of religiosity and Islamic sects. The snowball method carries however the limitation that participants will recommend the study to friends and acquaintances within social circles who share similar attitudes. As such, the majority of participants were Sunni and high school graduates, with a total underrepresentation of Shia Muslims or Muslims without secondary education.

Conclusion

Acculturation and bicultural identity models are conceptualised under the presumption that social identities are discreet psychological phenomena capable of interaction. Following our research, it is questionable if and how such models are applicable with second-generation Muslims. Nonetheless, they are prone to be studied within the modalities of such theories, by assuming that increased islamophobia disrupts the relationship between religious and national affiliations. While many second-generation Muslims indeed experience challenges in Western countries, it remains unclear how these difficulties can be translated into frameworks of social identities. As we have shown in our research, it appears that personal experiences are significant in the formulation of social identities and their continuous developments. More importantly, these social identities constitute one another in a developing narrative which cannot be reduced to a series of affiliations. Thus, by employing models that emphasize discreet social identities, researchers may inadvertently reify the wider socio-political contexts in which participants live. Prospective research would benefit from focusing on specific environments salient to a young Muslim's identity development instead. Participants in our study allude to the importance of family and peer contexts in particular, warranting further investigation. It appears, more than anything, that the experiences which serve as the backdrop for social identity development are relational in nature. As such, further research should thus take a closer look at how identity dynamics fluctuate according to the environments at home and among friends. Furthermore, there is a sparsity of identity research devoted to Muslim converts, whose identity negotiations may differ significantly from second-generation Muslims. Finally, it would be interesting to explore how identity development differs across Western nations in relation to different socio-political discussions on citizenship among second-generation Muslims. With the rising tide of public interest on Western Muslims, research should strive to adequately reflect the complex space second-generation Muslims occupy in the West – one which both reflects their experiences yet avoids assuming underlying *a priori* configurations of their self-structure.

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CHAPITRE VI

LA REFORMULATION DES IDENTITÉS MULTIPLES

Contextualising Chapter 6

This chapter is the culmination of the theoretical discussions outlined in the preceding articles. Articles 1, 2 and 3 recognized how socio-political structures set the precedent for how religious and national identities develop, followed by article 4 which questioned how prevailing identity models depict a Western Muslim's social identities as distinct despite their shared foundations. This chapter introduces a novel conceptual reformulation of the relationship between multiple social identities of Western Muslims, beyond the binary scope of the bicultural and acculturation theories. It proposes an understanding which takes into account the unique experiences and environments of our Muslim participants, underlining the significance of them being born and raised in Western societies. To extrapolate a novel perspective, we introduce to the concept of social representations which exists at the interdisciplinary crossroads of psychology and sociology. It serves as a theoretical backdrop and a means of appreciating the complexities of religious and national identity development, as a function of our participants' narratives.

6. Reconceptualising multiple social identities

This chapter will address how our results relate to social identity research in general, followed by an attempt to extrapolate an understanding of having multiple cultural identities by means of social representations. The most prominent methodologies addressing multicultural individuals – bicultural and acculturation models - are theoretical products of social identity theory. However, besides initially being developed for migrants, there are two additional concerns our results raise regarding these models with Western Muslims. As discussed in article 4, the first is their inability to distinguish between group membership and political categorization, thereby potentially reifying the socio-political discourse portraying the Muslim and national identities as distinct. Second, they dismiss the interrelated nature of the national and religious identities of Western Muslims, which appear to fundamentally co-constitute one another. As such, our participants' understanding of their Muslim identity is inextricably linked to their national identity, and vice versa. The bicultural and acculturation models instead establish *a priori* psychological distinction among Western Muslim individuals as if they have, in theory, multiple disparate social identities. Our results seem to suggest an alternative theoretical stance which is more adequate to analysing the fabric upon which national and religious identities develop, in a manner which affirms their co-constituted nature and goes beyond social categorisations imposed upon the individual as discussed in article 4. In other words, rather than exploring how a young adult could have both Muslim and Canadian identities as artifacts of social discourse, we will explore how an individual *qua* individual can theoretically exist as representing both Muslim and Western identities simultaneously. To do so, we refer to an alternative strand in social psychology, namely that of social representations, to unravel the fabric of multiple social identities. To begin, the concept of culture must first be reintroduced within the social representations approach.

6.1 Social representations and culture

The common understanding of culture is that it encompasses the values, beliefs and practices in a complexity that both produces action and is produced by action, as famously defined by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), whose description forms the basis of modern cultural research. Jahoda (2012) recently reviewed how researchers have interpreted this definition differently. Based on a cross-section of studies, he found that culture can be attributed to three different loci: culture as external to the individual, internal, and both. According to the external conceptualization, “culture is outside the individual. It is not located in the minds and actions of individual people. Rather, it refers to the press to which individuals are exposed by virtue of living in a particular social system (Schwartz, 2009, p. 129)”. Conversely, an internal definition of culture suggests that it’s entirely contingent within the individual. Wan and Chiu (2009), for example, argue that culture consists of the elements individuals believe to be cultural. In other words, by examining their thoughts, we get an image of the culture they’re attempting to represent. Here ‘Culture’ encompasses both internal and external perspectives, stipulates a network of information that not only acts upon individuals, but is also acted upon by individuals. Such a definition would not only account for the unique thoughts of individuals, but would also give credence to an overarching system of knowledge that binds these individuals together – via values, ideas, and beliefs. The term social representation refers to this network of meanings, first introduced by Moscovici (1963) as a means of explaining social psychological phenomena as embedded within social, political and cultural conditions. Its purpose can be seen to differentiate itself from the predominant approaches in social psychology based on methodical individualism (Farr, 1996). For the sake of this

chapter, Tateo & Iannaccone's (2012) definition of social representations appears to be the most appropriate in light of the subject matter of cultural identity:

a network of meanings, that the members of group or culture use to build the meaning of being individuals within the society. In their twofold role as both product and tool, Social Representations take part to the process of symbolic mediation" (page 7).

From such a definition, the social representation approach advocates both an internal and an external understanding of culture. It assumes, to put it simply, an underlying network of meanings (representations) which are shared by individuals in relation to others in society, and upon which an individual perceives themselves as part of a group. Moscovici and Kalampalikis (2012) affirm that social representations is an anthropology of our culture on the one hand, and a psychology of our culture when it relates to our common sense, ideas, language, etc., which make us act in a particular manner. Both Moscovici's social representation approach and social identity theory were both conceived in an era dominated by research focusing on the individual, which these authors felt dismissed the social context (Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011). Indeed, Elcheroth et al. (2011) contend that 'The context of Social Psychology' (Isreal and Tajfel, 1972), which included chapters by both Moscovici and Tajfel, was 'a manifesto of this movement'. Thus, while social representations and social identity approaches have historically branched into separate paths of social psychological research, Elcheroth et al. (2011, p. 7) argue that the two approaches are not only one in the same, but in fact must be taken hand-in-hand: *the way we orient to representations depends on how we categorize ourselves in relations to the groups with which those representations are associated.* In other words, the distinction between social groups is not just a social artifact, but indeed the very difference constitutes an organizing principle within the underlying meaning structures of each group.

Moscovici (1988) outlines three categories illustrating the relationship between social groups: hegemonic, polemical and emancipated representations. Hegemonic representations purport deeply embedded beliefs that are resistant to change, generally shared among everyone in a cultural group. Polemical representations refer to social representations which have antagonistic adherents, upon which two or more groups disagree. As such, while a cultural group may share the same inherent hegemonic representations, it may be further divided into subgroups based on explicit rivalries regarding an idea. Emancipated representations reflect elements of knowledge which are not yet compatible with the hegemonic representations of the group. New information produced by exposure to different cultures or novel scientific discoveries such as cloning are examples of this. Duveen (2007) argues that emancipated and polemical representations inherently suggest a degree of reflexivity, and are thus available in social discourse, whereas hegemonic representations do not. In other words, hegemonic representations allude to facets of knowledge which are taken for granted, upon which the emancipated and polemical social representations are deliberated. In other words, hegemonic representations significantly refer to the *common-sensical* network of meanings, outside the realm of consciousness, which binds groups together. Examples include basic existential notions of personhood, social ideologies, etc. It can be argued that cultures are established upon collective hegemonic representations which lay the common-sensical foundations of meanings upon which individuals reflexively negotiate novel experiences. Thus, by means of hegemonic social representations – representative of dominant cultural schemas – new objects become anchored, rendering the unfamiliar, familiar. Duveen (2007) argues however it would be wrong to think of culture as merely a collection of hegemonic social representations, “since it would be absurd to consider emancipated or polemical representations as somehow not also being cultural forms.”

Thus, according to Duveen (2007), social representations provide a few significant insights into the idea of culture. First, contemporary usage of culture often

overestimates the homogeneity of a group, assuming that all members are identical in beliefs, values and ideas (Duveen, 2007). Naturally, this is more often than not a conscious decision to facilitate methodological recruitment procedures; it remains a conceptual fallacy which mainstream psychology has yet to resolve nonetheless. Social representations overcome this trap by proclaiming, *a priori*, that social representations come to fruition precisely as a function of diverse opinions. Thus, social representations assume diversity by their very essence. The second advantage is in line with the first; namely, cultures are not only heterogeneous, but the lines between them are not ‘clear cut.’ Such a definition of culture ultimately reifies differences between groups. This, however, is inconsistent with the great heterogeneity found in the 21st century, as underlined by contemporary social scientists (e.g. Moghaddam, 2012). Modern theorists must acknowledge that, by virtue of a globalized world, the values, beliefs and ideas of one culture may have well infiltrated all others – very few communities are completely isolated. Thus, social representations provide an accommodating theoretical framework to appreciate this cross-contamination, in which hegemonic representations (implicit beliefs) of one group may become the polemical representation of another (debated in social discourse). Finally, Duveen (2007) argues that culture is considered a network of social representations, in which the cultural context formulates the basis upon which the social representations are organized. As such, one cannot examine social representations outside or irrespective of a cultural context. For Duveen (2007), social representations provide a framework for analysing culture in a manner that does not reify it. The issue with contemporary definitions of cultures, according to Duveen, is that they categorically assume all members of a group are alike in relation to shared values, beliefs and ideas. The discrepancy between hegemonic and polemical/emancipated representations is significant. Arguably, one can propose that cultural backgrounds resemble hegemonic representations, in that they lay the framework upon which individuals may reflexively negotiate novel ideas. Thus, by means of hegemonic social representations – representative of the dominant cultural

schemas - new objects become anchored and objectified, rendering the unfamiliar, familiar. Important to note here is the exception to this rule in which hegemonic social representations become polemical/emancipated due to wide-ranging, collective changes to a group's circumstances. Taylor (2002) gives the example of aborigines, whose fundamental epistemological understanding of the world was significantly altered with colonization.

Thus, social representations and social identities are deeply interrelated. Wagner et al. (1999), for example, argue that a social identity is a product of a group's shared representations. Elcheroth et al. (2011) relate to the relationship between social identities in a wide-ranging to encompass all social affiliations in a manner different but nonetheless compatible with Duveen (2007). Duveen (2007) purports the foundation of a cultural identity is determined at the point where a representation is no longer communicable. Communication, in other words, provides the means by which cultural ideas are interacted with. As long as individuals are able to communicate an idea to one another, they share a similar cultural identity upon which a platform of commonsensical knowledge is established. Thus, the very capacity to communicate an idea hints at an implicit reality that, to some degree, the cultural backgrounds are shared. At the same time, the inability to communicate an idea constitutes a barrier that reinforces an identity from those who do not share the same set of hegemonic representations. In other words, a cultural boundary comes to fruition when the commonsensical foundations of knowledge differ to the extent that overt ideas are not transferable. This differs from the common understanding of a cultural identity, which often relates to *a priori* group categorisations of ethnicity, race and/or religion (R. Jenkins, 2014). It also suggests that communication is not entirely determined by language; individuals from France and Germany may effectively communicate a great number of ideas to one another despite linguistic barriers. A farmer from France may find it more challenging however to

communicate ideas with a shaman from Mongolia, whose implicit knowledge structures (of existential and ontological realities) differ more profoundly.

While communication can take many forms externally, there are significant implicit forms of communication which occur between individuals (Elcheroth et al., 2011). This notion of implicit, taken-for-granted knowledge, underlined by Moscovici (1988), is central to our argument. Many things that are stated or argued necessitate implied forms of understanding. This notion, which scholars such as Latour (see e.g. Latour, 1996; Sammut, Daanen, & Moghaddam, 2013) relate to as interobjectivity, has garnered traction in recent years. The concept relates to all forms of knowledge necessary to create space for intersubjective interaction. An oversimplified example of this is an Egyptian's stereotypical representation of a dog, which entails that of a farm animal or street pest. Contrast this to the representation of dogs in Canada which are often honored within family ranks. Here, we clearly see a conflict in the hegemonic representation of the animal's intrinsic value. Now if we were to expand on the notion that an Egyptian-Canadian has been exposed to both hegemonic representations, then the social representation of a dog must necessarily conflict. This brings the dog's ontology to consciousness and therefore available for cognitive negotiation; the implicit meanings of a culture become explicit. The individual, bestowed with a reflexive capacity, is then tasked to negotiate the two or more antagonizing views contained within a representation. The hegemonic thus becomes polemical within a network of meanings. Agency here is significant; a reflexive individual is tasked with negotiating this polemical representation (e.g. dog as farm animal vs. dog as family) and find a resolution. Moscovici (1984) previously likened culture very similarly to social representations, in that they have an agentic capacity to entice and empower us to act upon them. This invisible web of meaning not only formulates the basis upon which our communication takes place, but also sets the foundation in which new objects and ideas are interpreted. In other words, an individual's agency to interpret and negotiate a novel idea is contingent on the

implicit knowledge structures which they share with others. This implicit knowledge base is established upon an immense array of taken-for-granted hegemonic representations.

To summarize, the foundation of a cultural identity based on hegemonic representations has several advantages. First, it reformulates the concept of cultural groups in a manner that bypasses political categorization, at least in theory. Second, it takes into account that while individuals may consciously ascribe themselves to a particular group (as prescribed by social identity theory), a cultural identity understanding based upon social representations relates to the extent to which an individual may formulate a group identity based on their abilities to communicate with others based on shared hegemonic representations. Finally, hegemonic representations beg to question the divisions we ascribe between cultural groups based upon *a priori* categorizations of their differences. This relates back to the example of individuals from France and Germany but, more centrally to this chapter, the question of Western-born Muslims. Are their national and religious identities so distinct as to deserve categorical differentiation?

6.2 Social representations and social identities: discussing Western Muslims

In the following section, I will present how the social representations approach applies to the religious and national identity narratives of our participants. This theoretical formulation will establish a means of understanding the subjective hybridity discussed in chapter 5, in which Western Muslims belong to a ‘third space’ within their religious and national identities that is more than the sum of its parts (Bhabha, 2012). Social representations will be used to reconceptualise the interrelatedness of national and religious identities. I will first illustrate how the general framework of social representations presented above applies to

understanding multiple social identities among the participants. This will be followed by a brief review of the possible critiques one may put forth towards such a proposal.

Our participants offered a variety of images to illustrate their identity development. Sherif, for example, described himself as being a ‘bridge between two worlds’. This simile is poignant, indicating a wholeness within diversity. To Sherif, his identity is personified by a bridge which, as per its function and purpose, would not exist had it not been situated between two divergent landmasses. Although the worlds are separate, he is personified in the space between the two; the bridge’s very existence is contingent on difference, and its essence implies it not belonging exclusively to one side or the other. Similarly, Leila draws the analogy of a steak to exemplify her identity, stating that the meat of her identity is Muslim, but her Iraqi and Danish affiliations are the marinade. Here we see that although the meat has a basic flavor, the mixture of different ingredients in the coating (and, of course, the flavor seeping into the fibers of the meat) alter its taste. Thus, the initial piece of meat is no longer the same once coated, and although one may be able to discern individual ingredients apart from others, the dish is truly more than the sum of its parts. Not only are the boundaries blurred in both images, but they also underline the significance of social representations as an appropriate means of understanding these images.

If hegemonic representations formulate the basis of our common-sensical understanding, we can assume that Western Muslims identifying with different groups (in this case, majority society as well as a religious group) share a great deal with the society in which they were raised. This is due to the very nature of implicit knowledge structures, which facilitates communication based upon a shared understanding. What is shared between individuals is not necessarily only a function of knowledge, but rather an interaction of the implicit understandings upon which knowledge is construed. The capacity to communicate and understand others is buttressed by the shared body of knowledge within the social environment. As such,

Western Muslims share the same implicit understandings regarding religious and national identities as their non-Muslim Western cohorts - assuming the Western Muslims are exposed to larger social discourse. Amal for example, born to a Pakistani family in Copenhagen, relates the following when discussing the development of her religious identity:

Amal: I started to question the stuff, and part of my life was becoming more religious, where I actually decided to wear the headscarf. That was the point in my life where I decided who I am and what I want to do, and the Islamic way of doing things. It's me who decides it - nobody's telling me.

Growing up in a Pakistani household, Amal was raised as a Muslim although only began practicing her faith in her late adolescence. She describes how her Muslim identity only became salient when she finally chose it for herself, instigating a desire to learn more about Islam. Amal's insistence on choice as a determining element of her faith is not arbitrary. Indeed, the importance she accords autonomy and the 'true self' reflects an inherent individualism that is socially produced via the philosophical-religious orientation and political organization of Danish society (Cushman, 1996; Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004). As such, the very foundations of her religious identity development hinges upon the implicit knowledge structures of her Danish environment. It is not a question of integration, for indeed the national hegemonic representations of autonomy precede her affiliation to her Muslim identity; it formulates the fundamentals upon which her faith develops. Amal's example showcases how fundamentally unique the perspective of Western Muslims can be, which iterations of cultural integration within bicultural identity and acculturation models do not seem to capture.

The first major extrapolation from this is that the religious and national identities can be discursively separate, but not ontologically. Many of our Muslim participants

verbally affirmed a divide between their religious and national social identities – psychologically, socially, politically. Yet, like Sherif's bridge analogy, their narratives portrayed a perpetual state of integration and disintegration, attempting to consolidate the distinctions of their social identities, but also arriving to the conclusion that it is impossible. Because of this, as discussed in chapter 5, it appears their identities existed in a hybrid 'third space,' which for many was not entirely national or religious, but rather something else entirely that is not merely the sum of individual parts. These results suggest that individuals with multiple social identities are not necessarily agents of any individual culture, but that their cultural identity itself is in fact far more complicated. Indeed, growing up within their social environments, many of the taken-for-granted hegemonic representations become polemical and available for conscious deliberation. A unique palate of implicit knowledge structures is cultivated during their development; religious meanings are derived within a secular environment that is perceived to antagonize Western Muslims, and national values become foundational with religious significance. The Western Muslim, in other words, develops according to a unique set of implicit knowledge that has not yet become polemical or emancipated, but that is nonetheless different than his migrant ancestry or national cohorts. Again, this third space represents neither religious or national social identities (i.e. either as group affiliation or as an intra-psychic component), nor a combination of both, but rather the formulation of an entirely new platform of meaning.

Second, the representation of a 'Muslim identity' is also negotiated upon an underlying network of meanings consisting in part of Western hegemonic representations. Western Muslims, as such, develop their relationship to Islam significantly on an implicitly Western understanding of what a Muslim is. These implicit understandings are open for discussion, but several observations can be made based on our results. The first is the exotic perception of Islam as something all-together different than Western society, which Edward Said (1994) famously

discussed. Islam, in this sense, is understood in a way to be antagonistic to basic liberal values. Western Muslims, in their development of their Muslim identity, inevitably perceive themselves as ‘the other’ – even converts. They may contest this formulation, or give in to it, but they cannot escape it; it is established upon the basic knowledge structures of how the Muslim representation is socially perceived. A second reflection has to do with the implicit separation between religion and state. As such, in addition to the previous argument, the Muslim identity is conceivably irreconcilable within a nation-state that is explicitly secular. This point becomes polemical time and time again, when political discussions are held over the status of religious symbols in public space. Even more salient in Western countries such as Denmark is the implicit understanding that a woman wearing headscarf could never represent the state in any high-ranking governmental position, such as a judge (Holtug, 2011). This implicit separation between religion and state is foundational in how Western Muslims develop their identity, thereby reifying the distinction between religious and national identities. Such socio-political paradigms implicitly underline research methodologies as well, reifying the Muslim identity as distinct from others. This can become quite problematic as Reicher (2004) contends, because “models that serve to reify social categories in theory may also help reify categories in practice”, thus perpetuating social divisions. As such, Howarth (2009) conducted a study investigating how psychologists both examine and reproduce ‘race’ in their research. She argues that by qualifying ‘race’ as a category of analysis, researchers impose a “racial classification onto the design of the study, in the sampling strategy or questions asked, therefore treating ‘race’ as an *a priori* object of study [...]” (Howarth, 2009, p. 3). Howarth (2009) instead employed social representation theory to examine how the researcher and participant co-construct the meaning of race. Her research is especially significant in light of our discussion, as it begs to question to what extent our research served to reify the Muslim identity as an *a priori* object of study, according to implicit socio-political knowledge structures.

6.3 Limitations of social representation approach

There are some issues with this understanding of social identities, which is set upon the foundation of communication within a shared network of meaning. The most glaring of which is addressing the relationship between social identities *qua* group affiliation, and the unique set of hegemonic representations upon which each individual develops according to their social context. In other words, if a Western Muslim individual develops according to their unique collection of hegemonic representations, which may not necessarily reflect that of any particular cultural group but a ‘third space’ in between, how then do we classify them? The challenge lies in the fact that if a Muslim’s social identities (as per group affiliations) are entirely embedded within one another upon the same implicit network of meaning, how does this reconcile with the social reality in which identities are perceived and experienced as discreet. Indeed, cultural identities play a significant social and political role, which means the social and political aspects cannot be dismissed. Here, Jenkins’ (2014) rebuttal of Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000) critique of social identities as an essentially elusive construct boils down to a single point. He argues that, despite their ambiguity, the popularity of social identities in all domains of social discourse (politics, everyday discourse, academic journals, etc.) inescapably make them experienced as real, and thus subjects worthy of research. As such, even if Western Muslims relate to a very unique collection of hegemonic representations, the very presence of discreet social identities in social discourse reifies an existential need to relate to others in terms of identity affiliation. In other words, social identities are social representations in and of themselves. Thus, individuals do not only relate to social identities on the basis of group affiliation, but negotiate them continuously as polemical representations within socio-political contexts.

6.4 Concluding thoughts

William James (2013) famously suggested that individuals develop ‘multiple voices’ in accordance with their multiple social identities. This ‘multi voiced-ness’ is a great metaphor for the American heritage of identity acculturation research, in which, for example, religious, ethnic and national identities are discreet, separate entities within an individual. According to the bicultural and acculturation models, multicultural individuals necessarily ascribe to various, and sometimes disparate, group values stipulated by their social identities. These theories attempt to uncover the processes by which individuals with multiple social identities ‘integrate’ their various affiliations. However, the term integration is highly politicized, and it begs the question if one can dissociate its political implications from academic analysis (Olwig & Paerregaard, 2011). The narratives of our Western Muslim young adults highlight a complex relationship between national and religious identities which go beyond the sum of their parts. Novel approaches to social identity development should instead propose the possibility of a lifelong negotiation of social values that continuously transform our identity one moment to another. Reiterating Bibeau (1997), our zeitgeist requires a reformulation of identity within a transcultural context as well as a redeployment of models that emphasize the transitional nature of people’s lives. Multicultural descendants, more than anyone else, warrant a re-evaluation of the basic presumptions embedded within social identity theories, which refer explicitly to intergroup dynamics rather than intra-psychic group dynamics. The social representation approach may not address all the challenges inherent in Western Muslim identity development. Nonetheless, it still provides a unique vantage point to consider the unique experiences of an individual as a function of their social environment. Thus, the social representation approach provokes researchers and laymen alike to question *a priori* categorizations of Western Muslims as individuals

that are subject to disparate religious and national cultural identities, reformulating their identity development outside the confines of bicultural and acculturation theories.

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CHAPITRE VII

CONCLUSION

7. Conclusion

This final chapter will summarize the preceding five chapters, addressing the research questions of the project. We then discuss the clinical implications of our research, followed by a review of potential limitations and future research directions.

7.1. Article review, synthesis of results and theoretical implications

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the religious and national identity development of Western Muslims as contextualized within their socio-political environments. Past psychological research on Western Muslims often hinged upon bicultural and acculturation theories originally designated for migrants. Instead, we investigated and compared the social identity development of Western Muslim young adults, including converts, using a contextualized approach, across three contexts whose political discourses are increasingly targeting Muslims: Montreal, Berlin and Copenhagen. Our results can be divided under two larger rubrics. The first relates to analyses that shed light on how the religious and national identities of Western Muslims develop in light of their socio-political environments. The second illuminates how national and religious identities relate *to one another*, in light of said contexts. These analyses are reviewed in the following sections.

Articles 1, 2 and 3 depict how the religious and national identities of Western Muslim young adults develop according to their socio-political environments. Article 1 explored the relationship between the religious and national identity development comparatively between political environments. It addressed how Western Muslim young adults in Copenhagen, Montreal and Berlin perceive their national identity differently and how, as a result, their religious identity expressions contrast accordingly. We found that Muslims tend to develop reactive attitudes in political contexts such as Germany and Denmark, in which the national identity was

perceived to be at odds with the Muslim identity. This observation was only realized by comparing it to Canadian Muslims, many of whom did not share such an outlook, although the need to combat islamophobia was just as present. Thus it appears essential to factor in the intricacies of the political context, and its understanding of citizenship, when discussing the Muslim identity. Article 2 then explored the process by which Muslim young adults develop their religious identities in light of their social environments. It explored how participants deferred their religious identity development from their parents to their peers, as it developed from a state of ascribed and inherited to chosen and enacted. Underlying this social development was an implicit desire of pursuing an objective Muslim identity based upon a need for certainty amidst increasing islamophobia. It explores how the political context not only impacts social identity development directly, but indeed influences the development of the religious identity by proxy of the youth's parental and peer contexts. Beyond the political contexts, the ethnic diversity of Western Muslim communities appears to impact religious identity development as well. As such, we argue that both perceived islamophobia as well as intra-religious diversity coalesce to produce a Muslim identity development pathway that necessitates objectivity. While islamophobia targets all migrants from Muslim-majority countries indiscriminately, it is this very diversity embedded within Western Muslim communities which appears to be of particular importance in the religious development of Muslim youth. Indeed, some participants would challenge ethnic interpretations of Islam all-together when confronted with theological diversity, favoring instead to seek and uphold an authentic 'Muslim identity' which transcends ethnicities and cultures. Our discussion in article 3 merges both political contexts as well as individual religious identity development in the narrative analysis of Muslim converts. Here, it is important to bear in mind the politicised nature of the Muslim identity discussed in article 4, in which the Muslim identity is inevitably placed at odds with the national identity in social and political discourse. We found that convert national identity conflicts transformed after conversion. The pretense for this change appears to be similar to

the social identity narrative of other Muslim-born participants: the need to defend Islam in public discourse. Indeed, the religious identity of born-Muslim participants appeared to develop in reaction to the vilification of Islam in public discourse. Converts inadvertently acquire this defensive Muslim identity, highlighting how intricately linked the religious identity is to the political environment. Furthermore, conversion is perceived as a means of relegating the centrality of race and ethnicity to the background, thereby reconfiguring the national identity. This reconfiguration doubles as a form of social critique, challenging elements of race embedded within the normative political discourse of national identification.

Articles 4 and 5 address the question of multiple social identities, exploring the interrelation between religious and national social identities among Western Muslims. Throughout our research, we found ourselves increasingly challenged with the employment of the bicultural and acculturation models with Western Muslims, which were initially developed for migrant research. However, our results indicate that social identities develop concurrently and, as we described in article 5, inter-reliantly. Furthermore, as discussed in article 4, one of the issues which confounds the conceptualization of a Muslim social identity is the interplay between groups and categories, as discussed extensively by R. Jenkins (2014). The basic premise is that a social identity can simultaneously connote a group affiliation in which the individual ascribes membership, but also a political category superimposed upon individuals. In most cases, social identities are a mix of both, and it presents a challenging hurdle to discuss a particular social identity without reifying its significance as a political entity within social context. Discussing the development of social identities with our participants, the line separating group and category was difficult to discern, as they readily sidestepped from one to the other. Significantly, the question of “the Muslim presence in the West” has rendered the Muslim social identity salient; our participants would negotiate and challenge the categorization, while simultaneously affirming being ‘different’ than wider society. Ironically, our own recruitment

process reaffirmed the politicised categorisation of Muslims by emphasizing their most socially outstanding identity. Indeed, our research flyers stipulated that we were in search for “Muslims to investigate identity development.” Not surprising then that, with ‘Muslim’ as the key entry point into our research, only few participants presented other social identities beyond religious, ethnic and national affiliations when asked to describe themselves broadly. This issue raises concerns with social identity theories as a whole. Arguably, the experience and negotiation of the wider political categorisation of the Muslim identity may even precede personal group membership. Indeed, identity observations made by our Muslim participants were often in relation to this political category of ‘being a Muslim in a Western country’, and not necessarily ‘belonging to a Muslim group based on shared characteristics’. In addition, discussing the Muslim identity may have recapitulated a call towards the political categorisation of our Muslim participants, thereby reifying the Muslim category (and identity) as distinct. As a result, many participants responded to the questioning of their religious identity as a challenge to describe how, in fact, they are not distinct as Muslims, but in fact share many of the same values as their national cohorts. All this relates back to the initial question: are we referencing the social identity of a group, or its political categorisation? Furthermore, how do we distinguish between the two? The political embeddedness of social identities within the wider social discourse challenges any discussion relating to a cultural group as a discreet entity. The constant negotiation between externally-defined politicised categories and internally-defined group membership relates intimately to the dual reality of identity dynamics as both a process and an accomplishment (R. Jenkins, 2014). Such dualities are difficult to capture in theoretical models that reify cultural identities as distinct. In article 5 we offer a theoretical alternative to the conceptualization of a social identity utilizing social representations, attempting to overcome the hurdle of political categorization. As Bibeau (1997) has argued, we must reformulate our understanding of identity, taking the novel, transcultural and globalized context into consideration.

Novel approaches to social identity development propose a process of a lifelong negotiation of values embedded within a social context, continuously transforming our identity from one moment to another (Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002). However, theorists have yet to develop a comprehensive theory that envelops this post-modern approach to identity formation. Individuals belonging to multiple cultural groups, such as Western Muslims, warrant a re-evaluation of the basic presumptions embedded within social identity theories. The social representation approach offers a different understanding to cultural identity based on two basic elements: shared, commonsensical knowledge and communication. Thus, from an ontological perspective, a cultural identity is not stipulated by the boundaries of ethnicity or political categorisation (while these remain significant in the real world), but rather the commonsensical representations embedded in that culture. As such, Western Muslims share the commonsensical representations of the society in which they are raised. In other words, the understanding of what it means to be Muslim develops on the same fabric of how other social identities are developed and negotiated. It is by virtue of the political nature of social identities, we argue, that Western Muslims come to see their national and religious identities as separate, discreet entities. The social representation approach may not address all the challenges inherent in multicultural individuals. Nonetheless, it still provides a unique vantage point to consider the interrelated nature of social identities. Indeed, despite the differences outlined previously in this thesis, our research begs the question if ‘Western’ provides a unifying category which envelops many of the hegemonic structures implicit in Danish, German and Canadian Muslim discourse. The perceived need for objectivity, for example, is necessarily a Western experience, therefore *ipso facto* an integral element of being ‘religious’ which cannot be delineated within distinct national-religious categories. These thoughts beg to question, once more, if the demarcation of social identities is a product of viewing Muslims in Western categories.

7. 2. Clinical Implications

There are several clinical implications we extrapolate from our research. First of all, there is a concern that investigating a patient's cultural identity (i.e. Muslims) is unintentionally a form of constructing it as well. The process of psychotherapy, for example, is a process of meaningful co-construction where illness enters and becomes produced within the intersubjective space of the patient and therapist (Kirmayer, 2007). This logic applies similarly to the subject of cultural identities, whereby investigating a cultural identity reflects the researcher's sequence of questions and interpretations of what constitutes a cultural identity to the exclusion of a myriad of other elements. These questions and interpretations, in turn, are subject to politicised definitions of cultural identities embedded within the wider socio-political narrative. Salient in the political discussion of Muslims, for example, is the topic of radicalisation. In the UK, the government integrated its PREVENT strategy into the National Health Service (NHS) as a mandatory directive to identify and report those vulnerable to radicalisation, which health care practitioners have deemed unethical (Summerfield, 2016). Thus, as a result of the PREVENT Framework (2015), healthcare practitioners are forced to navigate a quasi-legal terrain (referred to in the Framework as 'pre-criminal space') with Muslim clients, keeping an eye out for symptoms conducive to radicalisation. Research suggests that anti-radicalisation efforts may stigmatize British Muslims, even if State policies do not specify this population (Awan, 2012). Before PREVENT, 'islamophobia' has negatively impacted British Muslim access to care, as the community expressed unjust treatment by health institutions (Laird, Amer, Barnett, & Barnes, 2007). Anti-radicalisation policies integrated within NHS institutions may exacerbate the stigmatization of BMs, impede access to health care, worsen community morbidity and increase healthcare costs over time. Thus, a religious or ethnic identity exists

within the patient not only as a function of their own personal characteristics, but also as a product of the intersubjective space in relation to the professional's expectations and understanding.

Denmark, Germany and Canada do not have (statutory) anti-radicalisation policies implemented within healthcare institutions like the UK, though there are procedures in place to report potential radicals. In Denmark, for example, schools, social services and the police are foundational in a novel strategy (2011-2012) of preventing extremism and radicalisation (Lindekilde & Sedgwick, 2012). Quebec is also beginning to offer free training workshops for healthcare staff to identify and prevent individuals from radicalising (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, 2017). Germany's policies differ across local contexts, though efforts are now being made to develop a national prevention strategy (MacDonald, 2016). All these policies however, like the PREVENT outlined previously, have difficulties demarcating social and political categorisations of Muslims in public discourse in their search for prospective radicals. As such, the clear majority of reports are false positives (innocent); their only fault was to belong to a racialized Muslim background that is commonly associated with radicalisation (Open Society Justice Initiative, 2016). Without distinguishing between political categorization and group membership, a health professional's judgement of a cultural identity may negatively impact symptom evaluation as well as potential interventions. For Western Muslims, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the Muslim identity is not just a theological standpoint, but a rather a continuous negotiation of elements unique to their Western socio-political context.

The second clinical implication addresses the attention attributed to identity as a predictor for well-being. While institutional discrimination does have consequences on the self-esteem of targeted individuals (Every & Perry, 2014; Taylor & Usborne, 2010), scholars have yet to determine how identity mediates/moderates the

interaction. Taylor and Usborne (2010) argue that social threat to a group's identity constitutes a formidable impact upon the social self-esteem. Others have proposed that discrimination inspires internal conflicts between social identities (for Muslims see Holtz, Dahinden, & Wagner, 2013a). Such discussions place the focus squarely on the individual, presuming that a deficient self-esteem, and all its psychopathological correlates (among marginalized populations), can be related to identity concerns. Our participants however exhibited varying identity configurations in light of their discriminatory experiences. Some challenged their national affiliation as a result while others sought inspiration from bigoted experiences to find opportunities for positive civic engagement. Another group of participants described clear and integrated identities, but nonetheless still felt insecure and marginalized as a result of their discriminatory experiences. Health care practitioners focusing on identity development may inadvertently dismiss very serious concerns of discrimination and marginalisation by deliberating over issues of identity. Indeed, applying theoretical models of identity may potentially overlook the idiosyncratic experiences and agency of discriminated individuals. For example, although many of our participants were confused over the deliberation of their national identities, they perceived discrimination as a positive force towards good, increasing their sense of civic engagement towards a perceived intolerant society. The emphasis on identity, rather than an individual's personal experiences and capacity to 'act and react' to the circumstances, would dismiss our participants' commitment to benefit society as a function of a national identity they don't fully comprehend. Agency has already been considered as an essential ingredient in the aid of disenfranchised populations (see e.g. A. H. Jenkins, 1989), and it seems possible within our lengthy discussions with Muslim youth to elucidate how their understanding of agency has developed and transformed across their life course, without the need to call upon identity. We hope these insights provide alternative avenues of thought among clinicians.

7.3. Limitations

There were several significant limitations in our study worth noting. The first limitation has to do with the recruitment process. Although recruitment methods were identical in all three cities, it is important to mention that the majority of participants in Berlin were recruited from three major Sunni mosques, whereas Copenhagen and Montreal found most participants via the snowball method. As such, it may be that the interviews in Berlin reflect the specific discourses found within those mosques, and of mosque attendees in general. Jeldtoft (2011) distinguishes between public and private religiosities, in that participants found within mosques and Muslim associations may be more representative of organizational commitment and formal religious practice. However, this did not appear to be the case in our results. At the same time, the snowball method in Copenhagen and Montreal allowed for participants from diverse institutional backgrounds, levels of religiosity and Islamic sects. The snowball method carries however the limitation that participants will recommend the study to friends and acquaintances within social circles who share similar attitudes. As such, the majority of participants were Sunni and high school graduates, with an underrepresentation of Shia Muslims or Muslims without secondary education.

Furthermore, special attention must be devoted to the political underpinning of the word ‘national’ among francophone participants in Montreal, who explicitly related to the provincial identity of Quebec rather than Canada. Due to their little number, and the political dynamics involved in such rhetoric, we decided it was best to not address their narratives directly in our results. Nonetheless, their stories indicate many similarities with European Muslims, and understandably so. Quebec - with its less favourable attitude towards multiculturalism - is more antagonistic towards Muslims as compared to other Canadian provinces (Bakali, 2015).

A final limitation has to do with myself, the primary interviewer with all participants. As a Muslim male adult, my religious affiliation as well as my gender may have impacted the content and style of the participants' narratives. First, sharing a religious identity with participants may be considered both an opportunity as well as a hindrance within the intersubjective space. The benefit arises in the fact that the participants may be far more open to share their grievances of their respective country with another Muslim than with a non-Muslim. The hindrance may be that Muslim participants may be less likely to disclose conflicts with their religious identity, in order to avoid the stigma associated with appearing deficient in faith. Our analysis does not detect any biased responses however, and in fact many of our participants expressed gratitude in having a forum for sharing their thoughts - even when it came to disclosing their difficulties with the Muslim identity. The second element has to do with gender. While a female research assistant was present in the interviews featuring female participants, it may have remained awkward for some to share their experiences with me. Islam stipulates a degree of modesty between males and females, and so it may be possible some felt uncomfortable sharing their all their experiences. In light of the rich narratives our female participants provided, we presume this was most likely not the case.

7.4. Future research directions

Both Quebec and Europe have seen increasing islamophobia over the past decade. There is hope that the newly-elected Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau will subdue this wave. Already in his acceptance speech, he shared a story about a Muslim woman who declared her hope Trudeau will protect her daughter's rights should he become prime minister. He famously responded: "*To her I say this: You and your fellow citizens have chosen a new government — a government that believes deeply in the diversity of this country*" (Blatchford, 2015). European

Muslims, on the other hand, are challenged with traversing an increasingly right-wing oriented political landscape (Akkerman, de Lange, & Rooduijn, 2016). This landscape, a product of various socio-political factors including a migration crisis involving refugees and issues of national debt, has seen a surge in islamophobia (Kallis, 2015). Irrespective of the present situation, the subject of identity will play a central role in shaping State-Muslim community relations for both Canadians and Europeans.

While most participants related a prosocial commitment towards their national contexts, some did indicate a developing attitude of distrust and withdrawal. Here we reiterate the crux of the issue: many Western Muslims increasingly feel confronted with a discourse exclaiming ‘you are either with us or against us.’ In most cases, Western Muslims find comfort and strength in their faith; Islam appears to be a positive force of resilience towards discrimination (Sirin & Fine, 2007). However, it is also possible that the factors encouraging such resilience may not be available for some individuals. These individuals are then prone to develop increasingly antagonistic perspectives towards the State, as we have seen with some participants in Germany and Denmark. Thus, our observations that most Western Muslims develop a prosocial attitude underscores a dark reality of having been imposed a choice between aligning oneself with the State, or taking a position against it. This does not necessarily mean individuals choosing the latter have been radicalised; it merely suggests the bedrock upon which the process of radicalisation may occur. Prospective research must identify the factors in social and political discourse which paint Western Muslims as the ‘other’, and counteract such discourse by developing inclusive policies of cultural pluralism. In addition, more research is needed to address the recent anti-radicalisation policies appearing across Western countries. Here, researchers are tasked with the responsibility of informing the wisest policy approaches, while remaining vigilant that the subject of social identity itself is especially susceptible to emulate political narratives. As such, care must be given

that anti-radicalisation policies and discourse does not inevitably portray Western Muslims as a ‘suspect community’, thereby exacerbating their sense of marginalisation (Coppock & McGovern, 2014). In conclusion, the concepts and theories we employ are integral in how we understand how young Western Muslims develop. Perhaps the most relevant wisdom we extrapolated from our research is that identity may be best understood in relation to its socio-political environment - one necessitates the other. An apolitical approach to the identity development of Western Muslims may not only be dissatisfactory, it may ultimately be a disservice.

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APPENDICE A

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN MUSLIM IDENTITY RESEARCH – INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Project title “How does a Muslim young adult perceive the relationship between their social environment and their personal and collective identities?”

You are invited to participate in a research project. It is important that you read and understand this consent form. In case this form has words or phrases that you do not understand, or if you have any questions at all, please let us know. Take plenty of time to decide.

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research being conducted by Tarek Younis, doctorate student at the Department of Psychology of the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Contact information:

Phone number: +1 (514) 991 4977

Email: younis.tarek@gmail.com

I understand that the project supervisor Professor Ghayda Hassan may be contacted for more information concerning the responsibilities of the research team in terms of research ethics or to make a complaint or comments.

Contact information:

Phone number: +1 (514) 987 3000 ext. 4946.

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to explore how the environment influences how a Muslim young adult constructs their personal identity (“Who am I?”) based upon all the group identities they have available. The goal of this project is to examine how Muslim young adults manage multiple group identities.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that I will participate in a personal interview in a location that ensures confidentiality. The interview may take up to 2 hours. The interviews themselves will be guided by open-ended questions which will include, but not be limited by, the following topics: how social influences (friends, family, institutions and media) impact how my group identities are perceived; how social influences impact how my personal identity is perceived; the perception of holding a Muslim identity in Canada/North America/West; and the clarity of my group identities and how these influence the development of my personal identity, among other related topics.

The interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder with my permission. This is to transcribe the interview on a computer later on so the researcher can analyze its contents. Importantly, none of the information in the computer file will identify me, and my total anonymity is ensured at all times. Only members of the research team will have access to the content of my interview. These members only have access after they sign a commitment to anonymity and confidentiality, which states that they will not disclose my responses to anyone.

In order to not be identified, I am assigned a code number on a list which only the principal researcher will have. Research equipment (digital recording and transcriptions) and my consent form will be kept in a locked filing cabinet of the principal researcher for the duration of the project, and destroyed five years later according to the standards of ethics in research. If excerpts of my interview are used in academic publications, no information that identifies me in any way will be published.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that I will not receive any direct benefit from participating in this research project. However, my participation will contribute to the advancement of knowledge of how Muslim young adults develop their identities, which can be a means to understanding the difficulties they are facing in this process.

There are no significant risks associated with my participation in these interviews. However, some issues may rekindle strong emotions in me, which could be related to my current or past experiences. I understand that I am allowed to not answer a question that I feel is awkward or disturbing, without having to justify myself. I will be offered an appropriate resource for help if I wish to discuss my situation.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without justification or any negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published (possibly including some anonymous excerpts of my interviews).

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

Tarek Younis (Principal researcher)

Ghayda Hassan (Research director)

APPENDICE B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

General Interview guide

Sex:

Age:

Place of birth:

Identity - General:

1. Describe your identity.
 - a. Religious identity?
 - b. Cultural/ethnic identity?
 - c. National identity?
 - d. Others?
2. What groups (e.g. ethnic, religious, social, political, etc.) do you identify with?
 - a. Which identities have the biggest impact on how you see yourself?

Social environment

1. How do you define [select stated identity, e.g. Canadian, Muslim]?
 - a. How do your surroundings (friends, family, institutions and media) influence, for you, what a [culture] identity is? Split this question.
2. How do your [surroundings: friends, family, institutions and media] impact how you see yourself in [stated identity]?
 - a. How do you define being [select group identity, e.g. Canadian, Muslim]?
 - b. Based on differences within a group, how do you choose which one you ascribe to?

Political context and multiple identities

3. How is being Muslim identity in Canada/Germany/Denmark?
 - a. How do you feel in relation to other [Canadians/Germans/Danes]? If different, why?
4. Do you see yourself being [state multiple selected if applicable] identities at the same time?
 - a. Do they conflict?
 - b. How do you reconcile them?

APPENDICE C

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Research Participation – Muslim Young Adult Identity Project

I'm part of a transcultural psychology research team currently conducting a study on personal and social identities. The title of this project is "How does a Muslim young adult perceive the relationship between their social environment and their personal and collective identities?" We are actively recruiting participants with the following characteristics:

- You identify yourself as a Muslim-Canadian (e.g., second-generation migrant, converts, etc. who actively identify themselves as both Canadian and Muslim)
- Age: between 18 and 25

The purpose of the research is to explore how the environment influences how a Muslim young adult constructs their personal identity ("Who am I?") based upon all the group identities they have available. You will be asked to describe how you feel as a Muslim-Canadian, as well as how you negotiate several group identities (religious/ethnic/national/etc.) at once. Our research will be entirely based off interviews that will either be carried out individually. The interviews can be conducted in either French or English at the time and place of your convenience, and will be roughly one hour long.

You will not receive any direct benefit from participating in this research project. However, your participation will contribute to the advancement of knowledge of how Muslim young adults develop their identities, which can be a means to understanding the difficulties they are facing in this process. Furthermore, there are no significant risks associated with your participation in these interviews. Your confidentiality is ensured at all times, and none of the information you share that identifies you will be published.

If you are interested, please do not hesitate to contact Tarek Younis at younis.tarek@gmail.com. Your participation in this study is anonymous and confidential.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Tarek Younis

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact Prof. Ghayda Hassan at 514-987-3000 ext 4946.

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