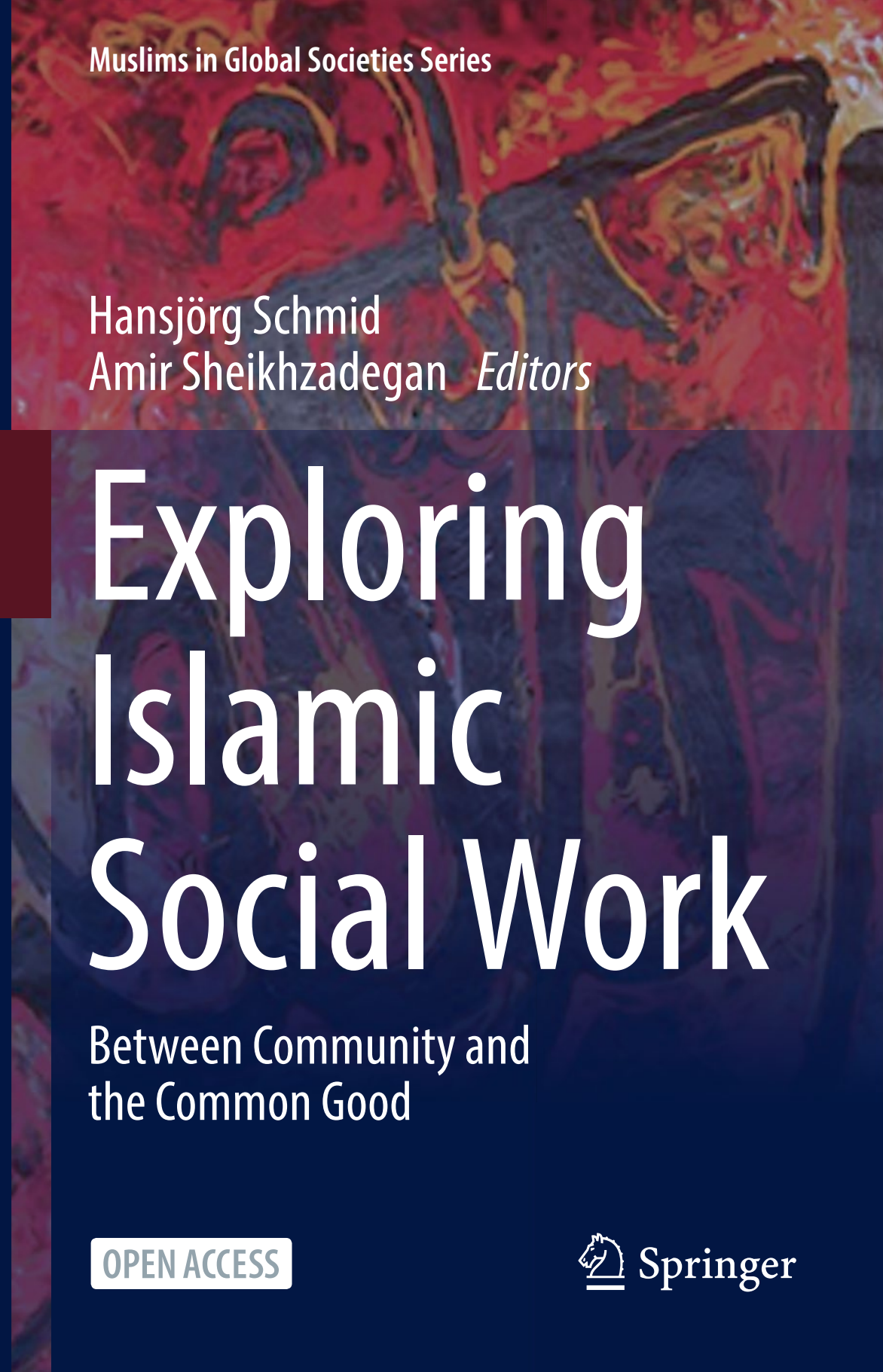
Muslims in Global Societies Series
Hansjörg Schmid
Amir Sheikhzadegan Editors
Exploring Islamic Social Work
Between Community and the Common Good
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Editors

Exploring Islamic Social Work

Between Community and the Common Good

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Preface

The migration of people from a Muslim background into the Global North since the 1960s, firstly as "guest-workers", later mostly as asylum seekers, has resulted in Muslim communities of significant size in various countries across Western Europe. Reacting to this demographic transformation, many practitioners, as well as theoreticians of social work, have time and again raised the concern that their conceptual tools and methods of intervention might not always be adequate for Muslim clients. There have therefore been calls for new social work technologies which are sensitive to the religious background of Muslims. Moreover, Muslim protagonists have themselves started initiatives, projects and reflections in the field of social work. Hence the rise of new approaches – be it concerning theological issues or questions of social work practice – that can be subsumed under the concept of *Islamic* social work.

Exploring Islamic social work in Western contexts is highly challenging, as it touches manifold activities, ideas, protagonists and contexts. Moreover, the development of Islamic social work is closely related to the dynamics of Muslims and Islam in specific constellations of time and space, calling forth both practical engagement and theoretical reflection. As Islamic social work is a young branch of research, many fundamental questions are yet to be clarified and the subject matter itself needs to be defined more precisely. We have therefore decided to place this book and the associated project under the programmatic title "Exploring Islamic Social Work". At the same time, Islamic social work is proving to be a controversial subject – both within Muslim communities and in the social, media and political debates of Western contexts. Concerns about proselytism are often articulated, as are expectations for the positive participation of Muslim communities in plural civil societies. The subtitle "Between Community and the Common Good" expresses this area of tension and controversy. The diverse chapters in this volume examine the role played by different stakeholders, organisations, target groups, ideas and reflections. However, the chapters do not only refer to Muslim minorities, but also to the broader horizon of current debates in social work. We are therefore pleased to welcome a broad readership from different disciplines and fields of practice.

This book is the outcome of several research activities undertaken by the Swiss Center for Islam and Society (*Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft* SZIG/*Centre Suisse Islam et Société* CSIS) at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. Founded in 2015, the SZIG/CSIS explores the interfaces between Islam and society by integrating perspectives of theological self-reflection by Muslim scholars into interdisciplinary research. The Center maintains a close exchange with Muslim communities and develops its research priorities based on the needs and requirements of practice. In the context of the SZIG/CSIS doctoral programme "Islam and Society: Islamic-theological studies", various topics with regard to both theoretical reflection and practice analysis are treated. Islamic social work happened to become one of these thematic fields in which empirical research, the further development of social science concepts, the analysis of the framework conditions of the welfare state and the development of Islamic-theological reflection flow into one another. Baptiste Brodard's PhD thesis served as door opener towards a multiplicity of challenging research questions, especially in the field of local interactions. Workshops with Muslim communities in Switzerland on issues of Islamic social work also opened our eyes to current transformations, processes and challenges.

One may wonder why the initiative of publishing such a volume comes from Switzerland – a small country in which the history of Muslim presence is only a few decades old. This should, however, appear less surprising if one considers the fact that Muslims often act, and the social and scientific debates in this country largely occur, among international networks so that the view automatically falls not only on Switzerland's neighbouring countries, with which the country is also linguistically connected, but also on other parts of Europe and the world. Moreover, given the fact that Islamic social work is, to say the least, an issue of interest across the Western hemisphere, Switzerland as a traditional host of international bodies and conferences should not be the least suitable site for such an enterprise.

Realising that it would be fruitful to look at the topic of Islamic social work from the basis of different country contexts and scholarly traditions, we decided to organise an international conference under the title "Islamic Social Work? From Community Services to Commitment to the Common Good" which was held on September 11 and 12, 2019. Already 1 year prior, in preparation for this conference, we invited various experts in this field to discuss and share their ideas and findings with us. Some of the chapters in this volume emerged from the above-mentioned conference. To broaden and deepen the picture we had obtained, we recruited some further chapters after the conference. This volume is the result of a long-standing process of discussion and exchange, and we are more than happy to see this exciting enterprise come to a provisional conclusion.

Numerous people have contributed to the preparations and the publication procedure. First of all, we would like to thank the 20 authors from 4 continents for their willingness to share the results of their research, to adapt their ideas to the collective endeavour of this book and to rework their chapters during the reviewing process. It is an inconceivably great joy and honour for us to bring together in this volume the varied and sometimes very different chapters and their contexts. Particular thanks

go to Sara Ashencaen Crabtree from Bournemouth University and our colleague Amir Dziri from the SZIG/CSIS for reviewing the introduction and giving us very valuable advice. Next, we would like to thank the collaborators from our institute who have contributed to the organisation of the conference and the publishing process: Arlinda Amiti, Valérie Benghezal, Nadire Mustafi, Nadia Seiler and Anna Zikeli. Catherine Nicholson Pfammatter ensured the proofreading with a high degree of accuracy and sensitivity. The collaborators from Springer Nature have supported the process with great interest and much patience. Our two anonymous reviewers helped to improve the manuscript and to deepen and express various aspects more clearly. David Tittensor and Serena Hussain readily agreed to include this volume in the Muslims in Global Societies Series that they manage as editors and provided constructive feedback. Thanks to all of you for the excellent collaboration!

Finally, we would like to thank Mercator Foundation Switzerland, as well as the Swiss National Research Foundation, without whose support the organisation of the conference and the publication of this volume would have not been possible.

Fribourg, Switzerland

Hansjörg Schmid
Amir Sheikhzadegan

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About the Editors

Hansjörg Schmid is director of the Swiss Center for Islam and Society and Professor of Interreligious Ethics at the University of Fribourg. Prior to this, he was a researcher at the University of Munich and a guest professor at the University of Salzburg. The founder of the international network "Theological Forum Christianity – Islam", he acted as its coordinator from 2003 to 2014. He holds a PhD in theological studies from the University of Freiburg and a habilitation (postdoctoral) degree in social ethics from the University of Munich. His research is on political ethics and Muslims in Europe, with a special interest in the interfaces of politics, civil society and Islamic thought. He is the author of *Islam im europäischen Haus: Wege zu einer interreligiösen Sozialethik* (Freiburg: Herder, 2013). Among his recent articles are "Interfaith Chaplaincy in a Post-Secular Context" (*Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 2020), "'I'm just an Imam, not Superman'. Imams in Switzerland: Between Stakeholder Objects and Self-Interpretation" (*Journal of Muslims in Europe*, 2020), "Interreligious Dialogues in Switzerland. A Multiple-Case Study Focusing on Socio-Political Contexts" (*Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society*, 2020) and "A Muslim Chaplaincy for Asylum Seekers? Results from an Evaluation Research Study" (*Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 2020, co-authored with Amir Sheikhzadegan). He is presently working on a project on Islam-related conflicts from a social science and theological perspective.

Amir Sheikhzadegan studied sociology and ethnology in Tehran and Zurich. Upon completion of his PhD in sociology at Zurich University, he took up research and teaching positions at Zurich University and later at the University of Fribourg. Lectureships at the Universities of Bern, Lucerne and Basel, as well as fellowships in Berlin and Sydney, were among his further academic activities. His research projects were supported by several grants, including those from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), Swiss Federal Department for Migration (SEM), and The Secretary of Judiciary and Internal Affairs of Zurich Canton. Sheikhzadegan is the author of a book on the rise of political Islam in Iran and Algeria, *Der Griff des politischen Islam zur Macht: Iran und Algerien im Vergleich* (Lang, 2003).

Furthermore, he has co-edited a volume on multi- and transculturality, *Gesellschaften zwischen Multi- und Transkulturalität* (Seismo, 2016), as well as one on political thought in Iran, *Beyond the Islamic Revolution: Perceptions of Modernity and Tradition in Iran before and after 1979* (DeGruyter, 2017). His published articles cover a wide range, from edited volumes to peer-reviewed journals such as *European Societies*, *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, *Spiritual Care*, *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, *sozialpolitik.ch* and *Social Inclusion*. Amir Sheikhzadegan's fields of expertise include Islamism, Islam and modernity, spiritual transformation, volunteering, social and collective identity, and spiritual care.

Increasing Spiritual Sensitivity and Faith-Based Service Provision: Pathways to Islamic Social Work

Hansjörg Schmid and Amir Sheikhzadegan

Abstract Social work has been characterised in recent years by a growing sensitivity to religious and spiritual issues, both leading back to its historical roots and responding to the challenges of contemporary post-secular society. This sensitivity also requires more knowledge about and attention to the specific needs of Muslims as service users, without neglecting their great diversity. The topic of 'Islamic social work', situated within this context, does not only concern Muslim beneficiaries in the field of mainstream social work, but also the central, active role that Muslim communities play: it therefore calls into question a merely individual focus. For Muslim faith-based organisations, Islamically-motivated social ideas and thought are also important. In Western contexts, which are often characterised by mistrust shown to Islam and Muslims, reflection on what contribution can be made to the common good within the framework of pluralistic societies is required. Finally, Islamic social work can be considered in relation to the broader development of social work, which is characterised by a critical approach to power-relations and domination, a sensitivity to diversity and an openness to alternative forms of social work. This chapter introduces the book "Exploring Islamic Social Work. Between Community and the Common Good" by analysing the state of research, identifying guiding questions and then developing and presenting the structure of the volume. Its focus is on contexts of Islamic social work and its target groups, its theological and ethical foundations, as well as its inclusion into general social work discourse.

Keywords Islam · Social work · Spirituality · Faith-based organisations · Community · Human rights

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Introduction

The term 'Islamic social work' might seem a contradiction in itself: how can largely secular social work discourses and Islamic thought on social issues be brought together at all? The current book seeks to meet exactly this challenge, operating at the interface between Islamic studies and social work research. It aims to contribute both to mainstream social work, which is faced with cultural as well as religious diversity, and to Islamic studies, which is proving itself as a field of practice. In the present-day context where topics linked to Islam often result in highly controversial discussions, researching Islamic social work is no exception. While some might fundamentally criticise Islamic social work, others seem to highlight its merits in a rather apologetic manner. In contrast to both these approaches, this publication aims to analyse the manifold relational dynamics of Islamic social work and place them in a wider context. Looking at issues linked to Islam as a strongly "public religion" (Casanova, 1994) can also be seen as an indication of a soul-searching process within mainstream (Western) social work, an expression of its self-critique of the dogmatic secular as well as of the "profession's proselytising attitude" (Gray & Coates, 2008, 13).

Despite a growing interest in Islamic social work, the research on this topic is quite scant, as opposed to subjects such as spirituality and social work, or faith-based initiatives with a Christian background (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013a). This is partly because Islamic social work remains quite unknown and less visible, which is why it has been characterised as "hidden voluntary social work" (Borell & Gerdner, 2011). Addressing this gap, this volume brings together contributions that, through theoretical reflection as well as empirical research, shed light on various facets of Islamic social work.

Using the term 'Islamic social work' might evoke particular geographic associations. The focus of this book, however, is not on the indigenisation of social work in so-called 'Islamic world' contexts (Ragab, 2016, 339; Soliman, 2013), but rather on 'Western' contexts including Europe, North America, Australia, and South Africa. Nor is it about international Muslim humanitarian aid and international charity organisations, which are also partly based in Western contexts (Benthall, 2016). Due to the immigration of populations with Muslim faith and culture and a consequent pluralisation of Western societies, the topic of Islamic social work constitutes a major challenge to the respective countries (Gray & Coates, 2008, 18). The focus on Western contexts, however, needs to be substantially differentiated, primarily because of the variety of welfare regimes in these countries (Göçmen, 2013). Despite this diversity, however, some similarities, including Western Muslims' experiencing of othering (Husain, 2019, 12; Husain & Ross-Sheriff, 2011, 372) can be identified, too. Whereas in Muslim majority countries, Islamic social work can be seen in the context of identity preservation policies, thus evolving from western-style social work to an "Islamisation of knowledge" (Ragab, 2016, 330), in Western contexts it is instead more an encounter at the interface between religious motivations and largely secular practices. One major reason why the Western context is of

particular relevance in relation to this topic is that there is an ongoing debate, both in integration politics and within Muslim communities themselves, about indigenising Islam as a measure to promote Western Muslims' contribution to the common good (Ramadan, 2004). Conversely, one can also speak of "Islamically indigenised social work" (Barise, 2005), the result of appropriating a secular concept within an Islamic framework.

Linking the focus on Islam to wider developments within social work, the following discussion is structured into five parts: the subsequent second section reviews recent developments in social work with regard to spirituality and religion, while the third and fourth sections focus on the role of communities and faith-based organisations linked to Islam. The fifth section consists of contemplations on Islamic social work as an alternative form of social work. A key goal of these parts is also to present and structure the current state of research. The sixth section seeks to unfold the structure of the present book and its contributions.

A Growing Awareness of Spiritual and Religious Dimensions in Social Work

It is widely recognised that social work developed from religious forerunners, becoming progressively secularised from the 1920s, and eventually establishing itself as an entirely secular profession (Loue, 2017, 17; Pierson, 2011, 9–11). In many cases, the emergence of social work as a modern discipline meant a secularisation of services that were formerly provided by Christian philanthropy and charities. A process of rationalisation and the limited ability of the churches to cope with the rapidly emerging new urban proletariat were causational factors in this transformation (Bowpitt, 1998, 681). As this shift in orientation gave rise to an attitude that was critical of religion, if not outright anti-religious, a rather "uneasy relationship between social work and its religious origins" (Shaw, 2018, 414) is understandable.

Similar conflictual developments took place in other applied fields and disciplines such as medicine, psychology and nursing (Sheridan, 2009, 120) which became linked to a general debate on secularism and religion. In this way, previously religious domains became secular, and religious issues were increasingly regarded as a private affair. This development had a strong impact on religious organisations in the field of social work, which likewise often turned into quasi-secular service providers. There was even a certain period when being more secular meant being a more professional social worker and vice versa (Karic & Ehlke, 2018; Ross-Sheriff, 2017, 13). More specifically, however, the impact of this very broadly described tendency differs from one context to another and is related to the specific legal and political framework of each country; and, in turn, how far individual nations favour the inclusion of religious organisations in the field of social services.

Parallel to the new perception of the public role of religion, since the 1990s social work has experienced a "spiritual turn" (Gray, 2013, 217). This development de facto signifies a "return to social work's roots that [were] grounded in spirituality" (Loue, 2017, 17–18) and a tendency towards a "respectful and knowledgeable inclusion of diverse religious and spiritual perspectives" (Loue, 2017, 18). This does not mean the re-integration of primarily secular social work, or its transformation into a religious framework, but rather a stronger consideration of spirituality within social work. In contrast to religion as "an institutionalised system of beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural realm" (Lunn, 2009, 937), thus comprising "the outward and objectified elements of a tradition" (Roof, 2003, 138), spirituality has a more personal and individual character and is therefore more congruent with contemporary social work than religion. Assuming that spirituality aims at "reaching, through some regimen of self-transformation, one's greatest potential" (Roof, 2003, 138), it corresponds to resource-oriented approaches in social work. Consequently, the focus lies on the convergence between social work and spirituality rather than the juxtaposition of them (Crisp, 2010, 21). An example might be to consider whether or not to include prayer in social work (Loue, 2017, 23–24; Sheridan, 2009) – an issue that involves both the beneficiaries' needs and the social worker's professionalism. This example illustrates again that religion and spirituality have far-reaching overlaps and that religion can be practised in the form of spirituality. Therefore, in a broadly understood sense, spirituality includes religion, so that the opening of social work to spirituality can also increase its religious sensitivity.

Such a change is part of a much larger paradigm shift in society often labelled as "post-secular" (Beaumont, 2018), which involves a critical reflection on the secular paradigm. Post-secularity does not mean an abolition of secular principles, but rather their expansion and a re-consideration of the role of religion in different domains. Different institutional and professional contexts, including social work, have been affected by this development (Ratti, 2018, 118). It has become evident that social work as a "holistic profession" (Crisp, 2010, 23) has to consider an all-encompassing view of the human being, which also includes spirituality and religion. Against this background, Julia Shaw speaks of "post-secular social work" with the following orientation:

> Accordingly, post-secular social work recognises correlations between social work, faith-based social action and post-liberal ethics of care as indicative of an alternative and supplementary social welfare paradigm to the bureaucratic and consumerist models purported by both the public and private sectors. (2018, 424)

Post-secular social work, understood in this way, emphasises the relational character of the human being and forms a critical counterweight to a merely economic perspective on social services. It is not a simple return of religion, but rather a synthesis of spiritual and religious traditions with contemporary ethically-oriented models. Post-secular social work, as "spiritually sensitive social work" (Canda & Furman, 2010, 1) concerns the relationship between social workers and beneficiaries within institutional and broader social contexts. There are specific ethical and

professional requirements for social workers who need to build up their "spiritual competence" (Chaney & Church, 2017, 39), in order to respond to the spiritual needs of service users and to avoid both an over- and an underestimation of religion and spirituality.

Moreover, knowledge of religion and spirituality in a specific faith is essential when working with the followers of that faith (Ross-Sheriff, 2017, 7). Several studies have detected a lack of specific training in this field and have therefore emphasised a need for more profound qualifications for social workers (Furness & Gilligan, 2010, 2186; Furness & Gilligan, 2014, 777–778). Besides acquiring religious knowledge, social workers also need to include religious and spiritual aspects in a permanent reflection on their professional identity and to observe how their own assumptions interact with the expectations and perceptions of beneficiaries.

Spirituality and religion may be sought as a "liberating" or "empowering resource" (Askeland & Døhlie, 2015, 267). However, in the social worker's interaction with service users, there is always a danger that Michael Sheridan describes as a "potential of erring in both directions" (Sheridan, 2010, 118), that is, the tendency to either over- or underestimate religion and spirituality. It is therefore crucial to strike a balance between these two poles. This concern is a major issue when it comes to assessing how to consider religious and spiritual aspects during social workers' interventions. The behaviour and actions of Muslims may be impacted by religious norms and concepts. When dealing with Muslim beneficiaries, there is the risk of categorising them as *homo islamicus,* that is, regarding their gender relations, family arrangements and religious practices as being determined by a stereotyped Islam (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000, 299; Rassool, 2014, 280–282). In so doing, one also runs the risk of perceiving Muslims as a "unique but isolated category" (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2017, 119). In order not to base interventions on unilateral projections, the task is to deconstruct such images and take into account the consequences of such 'Islamising' projections for both clients and social workers. To avoid these pitfalls, one should try to understand beneficiaries in the most differentiated way possible (Husain & Ross-Sheriff, 2011). These reflections illustrate that the challenges associated with a spiritual and religious opening of social work are already evident at an individual, but also at a communal level, which will be explored further in the following section.

When it comes to categorising and stereotyping there is yet another challenge, commonly labelled as Islamophobia – also known as anti-Muslim racism or anti-Muslim hostility, with a more individual focus. This phenomenon has a significant impact on Muslims in many regions of the world. It therefore also concerns social work, as experiences of anti-Muslim hostility may impact the situation of service-users (Husain, 2015). Consequently, it has been argued that knowledge about Islamophobia and related phenomena should be part of social work education (Savani et al., 2020). As Islamophobia can be understood as an expression of racism, it is usually approached through anti-racist social work (Dominelli, 2018, 145–147). Regarding Islamophobia as a form of oppression, some scholars have adopted anti-oppressive or human rights social work methods to tackle this issue

(Kandylaki & Kallinikaki, 2018). These sensitise social workers to different types of inequality, instead of focussing only on one type of unequal treatment (Penketh, 2014, 165). By being critical of any kind of discrimination and oppression – as required by their professional deontology (Kamali, 2015, 166) – social workers may be seen by those affected by Islamophobia as their allies (Smith, 2020) in counteracting this form of discrimination. Their task appears to be the "methodical identification, prevention and reduction of Islamophobia" (Farooqui & Kaushik, 2021, 465). This may also imply taking a critical stance towards prevention programmes and security policies that reproduce Islamophobic clichés (Latham, 2016). Since Islamophobia implies the "power of definition" (Ålund, 1991), a critical stance towards it also entails a critical questioning of one's own presuppositions and trying to perceive "the other" as subject capable of action, instead of the passive object of one's own reifying perception. This perspective requires social work "to focus on local knowledges, including the means by which local communities engage in resistance and social justice" (Beck et al., 2017, 69). In other words, overcoming Islamophobia should go beyond the actions of social workers, to also involve communities as actors. Thus, in a broader sense, the empowerment approach pursued here is focused on agency rather than merely looking at the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim communities. An integration of Islamic social work would also help to overcome the hegemonic claim of Western social work in solving social problems (Kamali, 2015, 6).

The Role of Muslim Communities

Taking into consideration the afore-mentioned spiritual turn, the pressing question is not *whether* but *how* to include spiritual and religious dimensions in social work (Sheridan, 2004, 23). Beyond the patterns of perception and interaction between social workers and beneficiaries, there is a further major aspect to examine when considering how social work may move towards meeting the religious and spiritual needs of Muslims. It is not sufficient to look solely at individuals; communities must also be taken into account, as they provide "validation and support from within an identifiable group of people" for religious ideas and practices (Hill et al., 2000, 66). Therefore, it is necessary to consider communities as important points of reference for individuals, but also as service providers, because believers may trust community-based services more easily. Situations that push Muslims to use social services are also linked to "communal challenges they face" (Abdullah, 2015a, 169). Looking back at the decade between 2006 and 2015, Faryal Ross-Sheriff, one of the pioneers in the field, states:

> The literature in this decade also seems to focus on how social practitioners should interact with Muslim clients and recognize the strengths of Muslim communities and the positive values embraced by the Islamic tradition. (…) However, few of the articles in the last decade in the electronic search of social work literature accentuated the positive contributions of Muslim communities. (2017, 19)

She therefore formulates, as one of her recommendations to practitioners, the following advice: "And, lastly, use writings about Islam and Muslims from primary sources and learn from diverse groups of Muslims in general and your clients in particular." (Ross-Sheriff, 2017, 20) This signals an opening for Muslim social thought and practice at a community level. The focus is therefore not only on the capacity of social workers to deal adequately with spiritual and religious issues of Muslim clients, but also on an integration of both Islamic thought and Muslim service-providers, which respond to the specific needs and choices of their clients (Oelkers et al., 2016, 102).

It seems obvious to connect the Islam-related discussion with the more general debate on 'community social work', based on local networks and mutual self-help structures, and to allow communities to participate as service providers (Pierson, 2011, 140–141), thus going beyond "individualised forms of social work" (Sheppard, 2006, 241). The latter relies on liberal individualism and neglects the anchorage of values and conceptions of a good life in communities (Clark, 2006). In contrast, multicultural concepts look at what resources communities can contribute (Abdullah, 2015b). Communities can assume different roles by either providing social services themselves or becoming partners of other service-providers and social workers. Therefore, there is a strong potential for social workers to work "with and within the community" (Hardcastle, 2011, 404). Examples of this are collaborations with mosques and imams (Al-Krenawi, 2016) or situations in which a social worker might pass clients on to specific religious service providers (Scourfield et al., 2013, 339). This may not only lead to partnerships between secular and religious organisations but also to interfaith collaborations, which may further contribute to social cohesion (Gärde, 2015).

The community aspect is also a counterweight to a secular understanding of spirituality. Research related to Muslims is critical of such universal concepts of spirituality because in many cases they do not correspond to the self-understanding of Muslims:

> We do not mean to suggest that Muslims have wholly unique needs with regard to social work, but rather that Islam is an example of a formal organized religion which expects its followers to conform to doctrinal, ritual and behavioural prescriptions and this expectation challenges individualized flexible notions of spirituality. (Scourfield et al., 2013, 330)

Nevertheless, the relevance of the individual dimension of Islamic normativity cannot be dismissed categorically, as the way Islamic norms are understood and appropriated differs from one individual to another, not to mention the individual aspect of *imān* (belief) as the very basis of religiosity and of *iḥsān* (perfection) as spiritual practice. Thus, individual spirituality and collective allegiance to a religion are not in opposition to each other, but rather form a dynamic interaction. Mohd Mahudin et al. perceive three interrelated dimensions of Islam:

> A person can submit to God at three levels. At the first level, *islam*, this is done via works or religious practices such as worship and rituals (…) and other social obligations. The *iman* level involves understanding and beliefs in God, his prophets, angels, scriptures, and resurrection. The final level, *ihsan*, in contrast to the previous levels, is the inner dimension

> where a person performs supererogatory acts of worship in his/her devotion to Allah. (2016, 113)

Having demonstrated the relevance of the community dimension in social work, the focus can now move towards the precise role of communities as service providers. In numerous Western countries, Muslim groups and organisations respond to the needs of their members by offering consultation services, childcare, educational programmes, spiritual care and material assistance, especially in the context of migration (Banfi, 2014). Although in many cases these activities can be characterised as community-oriented help, more often than not, they go beyond the boundaries of Muslim communities to explicitly benefit society as a whole. In some cases, Muslim bodies start to professionalise their services and to negotiate the ways in which they can become fully recognised service-providers within the welfare state (Nadir, 2013).

There is often controversy about the function of community-based help at the macro (societal) level. The question of how the community-orientation can relate to society as a whole, and to the common good, depends both on the respective welfare system and Muslim self-reflection. In a communitarian model, one would see less of a contradiction between group interests and the common good, as the latter can be realised through individual and community responsibility as the primary agencies of social support (Hardcastle, 2011, 403). Such a balance would, however, require that group interests are compatible with those of the political community as a whole, and that the common good not be imposed on communities in a paternalistic manner. In plural and dynamic societies, the common good cannot be determined *a priori*. Instead, it has to be characterised as a "social and cultural project" (Zaman, 2004, 130). This also requires a broad debate beyond the boundaries of religious communities, that must be able to speak in the spirit of "public theology" as a "mode of religious-social thought, ethical discourse, and expression of opinion on public issues" (Ali, 1995, 67) and make themselves understood to others – including secular parts of society. While the concept of public theology was mainly developed in Christian theologies, it has already been extended to a "critical Islamic public theology" (Sahin, 2018, 38), especially since it deals with general challenges for theologies (Ali, 1995). Public theology represents an appropriate framework for reflection on the common good in a post-secular context, where it is necessary to introduce religious and secular ideas into a broader discourse and to go beyond even a "multi-confessional concept of the common good" (Nekroumi, 2018, 49).

Looking at contemporary Islamic thought, one can find a spectrum of positions, from narrow views to those open to a procedural and participatory understanding of the common good as sensitive to the needs of each individual (Schmid, 2013, 510–513). Generally, the common good or *maṣlaḥa*, to use its Arabic equivalent, has often been employed to open up Islamic normativity to changing situations (Zaman, 2004, 133). It would therefore be wrong to principally negate the contribution of a Muslim community project to the common good. Rather, it is a matter of looking at the context and analysing the relevant motivations and rationales, as part of "a re-evaluation of the contributions that religion made and could continue to

make in providing human services" (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013a, 443). In this sense, the role of the community for the common good is not only a theoretical, but also an empirical, question.

Islamic Social Work Provided by Faith-Based Organisations

At the interface of secularity, the spiritual turn and a focus on communities, which are often perceived as ambivalent, the term "Islamic Social Work" (Barise, 2005; Warden, 2013) may evoke contradictory expectations. Therefore, it seems advisable to explore this term further, along with the question of what makes social work 'Islamic'. For this purpose, the concept of faith-based organisations (FBOs) will be drawn upon in a modified and critical way. Within the limited space of this introduction, it is only possible to refer to selected contributions from this richly diverse field of research. The research on FBOs partly corresponds to the rise of spirituality in social work, but there is a stronger orientation towards faith and religion that goes beyond that. FBOs may provide a broad spectrum of social services ranging from education and training, prevention, advice and counselling (Dinham & Shaw, 2012, 132). However, the "faith factor" often proves to be "difficult to identify and evaluate" (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013a, 461). A first criterion for FBOs is through self-identification: finding its expression in the organisation's name, mission statement or symbolism (Ebaugh et al., 2003, 422). However, organisations sometimes try to present a secular image that might not fully match their self-interpretation. Generally, a complex mixture of religious and secular elements can be assumed in faith-based service provisions.

The widely discussed model of FBOs by Sider and Unruh is a suitable starting point for further reflection, as it shows a high degree of elaboration (Sider & Unruh, 2004; Unruh & Sider, 2005, 103–125). Developed during research on Protestant congregations in the U. S. in the fields of social services and educational programmes, this model is built upon two dimensions. The first dimension consists of a sixfold classification regarding the role faith plays in the organisation: faith-permeated, faith-centred, faith-affiliated, faith-background, faith-secular partnership, and secular. This represents a decreasing scale of intensity in faith and religion. The second dimension focuses on institutional and service-related aspects. It firstly concerns the organisation and includes the following elements: its mission statement; founding; affiliation with religious entities; selection of board, management and staff; financial support and nonfinancial resources; and organised religious practices of personnel. Secondly, it concerns the programmes and projects for service provision in relation to the following issues: religious environment (space and place); religious content; the integration of religious content and other programme components; and the expected connection between religious content and desired outcome. The focus is not on individual religiosity, but on visible aspects of religious organisations and their activities in the public sphere (Sider & Unruh, 2004, 117). Even when talking about *faith*-based organisations, this, ultimately, is

concerned with religious and spiritual components and references in a broader sense and is not limited to faith as a personal and private matter (Newman, 2004, 102). From this perspective, the concept of FBO can be applied to a wide range of organisations.

Firstly, this model shows the wide variety of ways in which an organisation can be an FBO. However, taking into account the sophistication of FBOs, individual cases can be more complex than the typology predicts (Unruh & Sider, 2005, 109). For instance, secular activities sometimes have a religious dimension that is "not intrinsic to the action itself but lies in the meaning attached to it" (Unruh & Sider, 2005, 84). An organisation may also be faith-centred in one aspect and secular in another. Moreover, there are dynamics linked to funding issues. As FBOs remain in competition with parallel secular providers, there is an "isomorphic pressure to meet a basic level of service quality" (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013b, 484), if they depend on government funding. This may imply tendencies towards self-secularisation. As FBOs may be religious in their motivation and secular in their service provision, Sider and Unruh's scale of intensity of religion can be applied in an even more differentiated way. There is much to be said about the hypothesis that Islamic social work is a fluid concept often evading clear attribution. Its 'Islamicity' lies primarily in the organisational aspects and can be pronounced to varying degrees. Instead, a hybridity between 'Islamic' and secular elements seems to be more common.

In addition, a further aspect needs to be included in the model: Sider and Unruh's typology is focused on organisations on the one hand and services on the other. The underlying social thought, however, which serves as a motivation and identity-marker is not explicitly integrated, though Unruh and Sider also consider theology as a factor affecting the orientation of congregations (Unruh & Sider, 2005, 153–156). As social welfare studies show, social thought as an interface between theology and social action plays a key role in that context (Gabriel et al., 2013). Therefore, it also deserves due consideration in the case of Islamic social work.

As Sider and Unruh developed their model in the context of a study on Christian organisations, it is necessary to reflect on its adaptability to Muslim FBOs. A key point to consider is the organisational structure of Muslim congregations, which often strongly differ from church congregations, as the former constitute themselves through participation in prayer and other activities not necessarily entailing a formal membership; and they rely on volunteers more strongly than many churches do. In her definition of FBOs, Beth Crisp restricts them to organisations employing professional social workers (Crisp, 2014, 11). This definition would exclude at least some of the social services provided by Muslim bodies and institutions, as the latter function in a pragmatic way and often without the professionalism social work would usually require. Given the smooth transition on the scale from volunteer to professional, such providers should not be excluded in principle. Even if some may be viewed as less stable, less structured and less professional, Muslim providers can serve as "intermediary bodies between diverse Muslim communities and statutory organisations" (Warden et al., 2017, 751). A further issue may be the space in which

the programme takes place. As in many cases, Muslim communities in Western countries dispose of multi-functional spaces, for pragmatic reasons there is often greater proximity to the prayer room than in church community centres; and it is more difficult to separate a "religious space" (Unruh & Sider, 2005, 117) from a secular one.

The general social climate and anti-Muslim attitudes may also have an impact on Muslim FBOs, as they receive special attention in public discourse and come under particular scrutiny. A study on the regulating practices of the Charity Commission of England and Wales regarding Muslim-identified charities (Patel, 2017) has highlighted the mistrust, control and governmentality inherent in these practices, characterising them as "institutional Islamophobia" (Patel, 2017, 42). Such practices hamper the activity and development of Muslim FBOs. Even if this finding cannot be easily generalised to other countries, it implies that discursive factors can have a lasting impact on the situation of Muslim FBOs. At the other end of the spectrum, there may be specific social policy measures that would benefit Muslim organisations and help them to realise their potential for the common good.

To sum up the discussion on Sider and Unruh's approach: whereas this model is based upon a comprehensive set of criteria, other researchers consider a single element concerning an organisation or its underlying values sufficient to use the label 'Islamic' (Abu-Nimer & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2008, 559). The minimal condition for social work to be characterised as Islamic is that at least the underlying social thought has a connection to Islam. Whether the service provision itself has any specific religious reference is not considered substantial. This is independent of the intensity of the religious reference, so that the categories 'faith-background' or 'faith-secular partnership' would also be included in the definition.

Additionally, when using the concept of FBOs, the criticism levelled at them is inevitably raised, as they are perceived as the "focus of so many hopes and concerns" (Sider & Unruh, 2004, 132). Some critics consider FBOs to be ambivalent when it comes to their contribution and warn that they could be accused of retreatism or proselytisation (Gray, 2013, 218; Soulet, 2014). Sometimes they are assumed to have ambiguous goals, as their religious and humanitarian aims may be intermingled, instead of being clearly separated. Due to the religious orientation of FBOs, the question of whom they include as beneficiaries and whom they exclude arises (Kochuyt, 2009, 104), although quite a number of FBOs are universal in their outreach. The proponents of FBOs argue, however, that, despite their limitations, they have the capacity to respond to particular needs of a specific group of beneficiaries. Furthermore, they underline that a diversity of service providers (instead of comprehensive state services) enables a "better fit between organizations and their clients" (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013b, 484), because it gives beneficiaries the possibility to choose among providers. Finally, it is argued that the scope of FBOs may in some cases be limited to "service users with a strong theistic world view, wherein everything is interpreted through a religious lens" (Warden et al., 2017, 751). FBOs thus oscillate between being appreciated or dismissed. Against this background, it remains a controversial issue as to what extent FBOs should receive government

support (Furness & Gilligan, 2012). The answer to this question depends on the respective welfare system and its capacity to include FBOs and to recognise their potential contribution to the common good.

Islamic Social Work as Alternative Social Work

It would be narrow-minded to discuss Islamic social work only in relation to spirituality, religion and Muslim communities. The topic also requires self-reflexivity with regard to social work as a whole and to related Muslim activities and reflections in particular. Beyond the general debate on the role of FBOs within the welfare system, some critics cast doubt on the compatibility between Islam and social work. Yet others speak of "social work's Judeo-Christian value system" (Gray, 2013, 219) to implicitly denounce Islam as being alien or in opposition to these values. In contrast to these views, some authors have underscored that social work shares "many of the same core values as Muslims, although they are expressed in different ways" (Chaney & Church, 2017, 41). From this point of view, congruence between 'Islamic principles' and social work values including service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence can be assumed (Chaney & Church, 2017, 37; Husain, 2019, 9). This leads Ashencaen Crabtree, Husain and Spalek (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2008) to plead for social work to be enriched by Islamic perspectives:

> However, what has emerged strongly from our work is just how compatible social work as a profession is with traditional Islamic principles and evolving concepts. Thus, the professional social work canon of knowledge can only be enriched by including Islamic perspectives. (170)

While this may sound overly harmonious, the same authors also discuss a "conflict in values" (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2008, 56) – for example, regarding issues like homosexuality. Beyond any discussion of convergence versus divergence of values, however, one should beware of perceiving Islam monolithically, as an unequivocal body of beliefs, principles and practices. In contrast, the starting point here should be self-reflections, interpretations, perspectives and vantage points of Muslims, through which the "diversity and heterogeneity of the Muslim *ummah*" (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2008, 167) and the "tremendous cultural and intra-faith diversity among individuals and communities of Muslims" (Husain, 2019, 2) can come to the fore. Failure to acknowledge points of convergence would promote assimilationist tendencies and hence pressure Islamic social work into adapting to mainstream social work. Depending on what position prevails in a specific context, the reaction in Islamic social work could then fall somewhere between full assimilation and total resistance. An alternative would be, however, for it to take the path of a 'different social work' – to draw on a term coined by Epple and Schär (2015). While 'alternative' is mainly used to indicate a deviation from mainstream concepts of social work

(Pollack, 2004), the term 'critical' serves to specify how such an alternative can be oriented. Thus, there is a wide overlap in the nuances of meaning of both terms in this context and they are sometimes used interchangeably (Oko, 2006). In order to move in such a direction, the most inspiring source would indeed be critical social work, the characteristics of which can be outlined as follows.

The most conspicuous feature of critical social work is indeed its attempt to address the structural roots of marginalisation (Epple & Schär, 2015; Fook, 2015; MacKinnon, 2009). Even though a structuralist view of poverty and deprivation can be traced back to the writings of the pioneers of settlement movement, including Arnold Toynbee, Samuel and Henrietta Barnett and Jane Addams, as well as to the works of Alice Salomon on social justice, critical social work in the strict sense emerged from the critical theory developed by the leading thinkers of the "Frankfurt School" (Campbell & Baikie, 2012, 70). Despite following its own path of development, it has therefore been consistently critical of "relations of domination and discrimination" (Melter, 2013, 105) and committed to "understanding, critiquing and transforming the profession of social work and the unjust nature of society" (Campbell & Baikie, 2012, 70).

It is noteworthy that the notion of social justice in critical social work has been widened and refined by other sources of inspiration. For instance, feminist social work (Dominelli, 2002) has sensitised critical social work in relation to gendered power relations (for a critical review see Featherstone, 2001). Furthermore, an integration of postcolonial studies into social work (Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2011) has served to avoid "orientalist social work" (Eliassi, 2013). Critical social work is also about questioning Western social work's conceptual claim to universality and opening it up to alternative concepts in different cultural spaces. This casts a critical light on its claim to exclusive representation that is often not sufficiently thought through:

> (...), Westernisation, as the major trend in current globalisation processes, universalises social work as a 'Western invention' that should be applied homogenously in every society. (Kamali, 2015, 19)

Impacted by postmodernist philosophical thought, social work has exposed "modernist conceptual practices of power which may reify dominant discourse" (Brown, 2012, 34) and thus promoted an anti-oppression discourse that "addresses issues of diversity, difference, and inclusion" (34). Finally, the thesis that social work is a *human rights profession* (Staub-Bernasconi, 1995, 2010, 2016; Healy, 2008) has made social work receptive to the thought that "human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible, and that the full realisation of civil and political rights is impossible without enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights" (UN [Centre for Human Rights], 1994, 5). Advocates of critical social work are, however, sceptical of any rigid universalistic approach to human rights that categorically ignores cultural differences. Silvia Staub-Bernasconi (2010), for instance, has criticised both "*hegemonial* universalism and *fundamentalist* pluralism" (10, emphasis in the original) and suggested, instead, a 'moderate conception' of universalism and pluralism. Openness to pluralism is also reinforced by the so-called indigenous social

work that advocates diversity in social work practice (Hart, 2015, 807). Finally, having grown "from a modernist, materialist perspective" (Campbell & Baikie, 2012, 72), critical social work has recently witnessed, as an impact of the post-secular society, the previously mentioned spiritual turn (Crisp, 2017; Damianakis, 2006; Graham et al., 2006; McKernan, 2005).

By being open to such a critical perspective, Islamic social work could broaden its spectrum of voices and diverse perspectives. Conversely, the approach of critical social work also offers a space for 'mainstream' approaches to allow exponents of Islamic social work to participate in debates. A critical stance towards power relations would sensitise Islamic social work to structural causes of marginalisation. From such a theoretical viewpoint, it could then resist tendencies to either individualise or culturalise conditions of distress and deprivation in the lives of Muslim service users and explore, instead, possibilities of empowerment and cross-religious, as well as cross-cultural, solidarities. Reflecting on gendered power relations would make it receptive to intellectual debates on Muslim feminism, as furthered by the works of scholars such as Amina Wadud, Leila Ahmed, Asma Barlas, Fatima Mernissi, and many more (Badran, 2009; Sirri, 2021). A postcolonial approach would render Islamic social work open to critical and historically informed perspectives on North-South relations and on the lingering effects of colonialism upon the current status of Muslim communities. Postmodernist philosophical thinking would give Islamic social work the theoretical foundation to withstand the paternalistic attitude of modernist intellectuals and policy-makers. The concept of post-secular society could reinvigorate Islamic social work's religious orientation and reinforce that a Muslim can retain his or her religious belief and allegiance without compromising his or her integration into a modern secular state. Finally, the notion of social work as a human-rights profession would open Islamic social work to the works of contemporary Muslim scholars who have tried to deliver arguments for the congruence of Islam with human rights (e. g. An-Naʿim, 1995; Bassiouni, 2014; Sachedina, 2009), not to mention the more general reformist interpretations of the Qurʾan that could loosely be labelled as "humanistic hermeneutics" (Abū Zayd, 2004).

The issues discussed thus far show that Islamic social work is a multi-faceted phenomenon subject to a myriad of influences, including the motivations and self-interpretations of Muslim protagonists, external perceptions of these people, characteristics of the welfare state, and interactions and connections between state, civil society and religious actors. As such, it requires multi-dimensional exploration in different contexts and from the perspective of different disciplines. Conversely, it is also a matter of challenging social work in general from the prism of discussions about Islamic social work. A crucial aspect of this critical stance would be to move the role of Western social workers away from a hegemonic approach and convince them to focus instead on accompanying communities and promoting their strengths and resources (Beck et al., 2017, 69).

Contributions to this Volume

This volume brings together a collection of empirical studies, as well as conceptual and theoretical contributions. It is structured in three sections, each with a distinctive focus and approach:

Part I covers *Target Groups and Contexts of Islamic Social Work*. As any theological and ethical reflection is context-bound and results from requirements and experiences on the ground, an empirical section constitutes the starting-point of the volume. Social work consists of interactions between service providers and service users. As previously described, looking at Muslims as the target groups of social work was initially an important impulse for raising awareness for spirituality and religion. It therefore seems obvious to start with a focus on target groups. There are examples from the most vulnerable parts of the population: children, prisoners, the homeless, and disadvantaged youth. However, an examination of interactions at the micro level would not be sufficient, for these are embedded in a broader context. Given the growing perception of Muslim communities as protagonists in both informal and professional social work, this aspect must also be taken into account. Moreover, despite all tendencies to formulate international standards, social work remains highly contextual. This is particularly the case when it comes to cultural and religion-related issues, because the specific underlying conditions of integration and social cohesion, the way the welfare system is organised between the state and non-governmental organisations, and the relationship between the state and religious communities together form a unique constellation. From a methodological point of view, addressing target groups and contexts requires an empirical approach, which largely underlies the contributions in this section. The starting point is thus to look at Islamic social work from the vantage point of specific cases rather than exploring it as a general concept.

Baptiste Brodard (chapter "Helping Muslims or Contributing to Society? Insights into the Paradoxes of Islamic Social Work for the Excluded") looks at Islamic social work for prisoners, the homeless and the disadvantaged youth, thereby discussing the tension between neutrality and community orientation. Whereas this chapter focuses on associations and projects that pursue a specific social purpose, *Lamia Irfan*'s article (chapter "The Religious Community: A Space that Facilitates Successful Resettlement for Muslim Offenders") concentrates on existing religious communities, by analysing the contribution of mosques to the rehabilitation of Muslim offenders by providing them with resources and social relationships. This kind of intervention can be seen as an example of informal social work. The following three chapters look at the impact of three different national contexts on Islamic social work: the contribution by *Daniel Verba and Faïza Guélamine* (chapter "Secularism, Social Work and Muslim Minorities in France") focuses on the French context, which officially excludes religion from the public sphere. As the authors show, the issue of Islam comes into the spotlight through religious references made by service users and social workers, as well as in the interaction between official social work and unofficial community involvement. *Sariya*

Cheruvallil-Contractor, Alison Halford and Mphatso Boti Phiri (chapter "Identity, Intersectionality and Children in Care: The Case of Muslim-Heritage 'Looked-After' Children in the UK") deal with the placement of what they call "Muslim-heritage Children" in the British care system and show the complexities regarding their life circumstances and identities. *Hansjörg Schmid* (chapter "Islamic Social Work Within the Framework of the Welfare System: Observations from the German Case") analyses the German context, which is open to the involvement of religion in the public sphere, focusing on the impact the welfare state has on this involvement. The chapter demonstrates that welfare regimes strongly influence the social work framework and the possibilities of developing Islamic social work.

Part II covers *Theological and Ethical Discourses on Islamic Social Work*. The starting point here is the basic observation that social work, as with any other form of social action, is motivated and shaped by ideas, especially when religious entities are involved. Consequently, reflection on Islamic social work and on the activities of faith-based organisations (FBOs) requires an analysis of underlying social thought. In a pluralistic post-secular society, however, these ideas are also topics of public debate. While general ethical reflection cannot limit itself to universal standards, an internal religious discussion of these questions as public theology must also consider the horizons of society as a whole and be responsive to a sceptical, if not critical, public. Following this logic, the contributions in Part II refer to theological and ethical questions, by looking at the potential and limitations of different normative discourses that legitimise Islamic social work. Although social work is not a classical subject of Islamic theology, it nonetheless requires theological discussion, as it involves the fundamental positioning of Islam in the context of pluralism and secularity. Moreover, such a discussion could contribute to a continuation and an opening up of classical discourses to new contexts and life conditions. It is therefore a matter of theological reflection (a) on the new field of Muslim communities, and (b) on how to locate this reflection within a broader societal framework. Against this background, the contributions in this section take a theoretical and reflective approach, while drawing on contexts, empirical experience and analysis as "epistemic weight" to further develop the normative discussion.

The very first contribution by *Dilwar Hussain* (chapter "Islamic Social Ethics, Social Work and the Common Good: Learning from Western Contexts") highlights the contributions of Muslim protagonists to the whole of society and explores a range of possible classical and modern legitimations of Islamic social work in Western contexts. *Serdar Kurnaz* (chapter "The *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* Approach as Theological Basis for Islamic Social Work: A Critical Analysis and an Alternative Proposal") critically discusses the *maṣlaḥa*-approach and uses *maʿrūf* as a tool to integrate human experience, by going beyond a merely textual approach. *Tarek Badawia* (chapter "Islamic Practical Theology: *waqf* and *zakāt* as Theological Foundations") explores the potential of *waqf* and *zakāt* for Islamic practical theology, considering Islamic social work as an integral part thereof. Two further contributions go beyond theology to also integrate philosophical or interreligious perspectives: *Nazila Isgandarova* (chapter "An "Epistemic Weight" of Islamic Practical Theology in Contemporary Islamic Social Work") draws on inspirations

from Christian practical theology to explore new ways of theorising Islamic practical theology generally and Islamic social work particularly. *Abdullah Sahin* (chapter "Islam, Social Work and Common Good in the Muslim Minority Context of Europe: Rethinking Shariʿa as Relational Ethics") understands Shariʿa as relational ethics and thus as a basis for Islamic social work. Therefore, he discusses from a philosophical and theological perspective the Islamic guidelines that would encourage Muslim communities to engage with contemporary European societies in order to contribute to the common good.

Part III discusses *Perspectives and Contributions to Alternative Social Work*. As already shown, one option for Islamic social work moving ahead would be to go beyond conventional models, to develop an *alternative* form of social work, by adopting a stance that would be closer to *critical* rather than *mainstream* social work. By doing so, Islamic social work would not only be relevant to Muslim providers, it would also enter into a constructive dialogue with social work in general. This would enable Islamic concepts to be integrated into broader concepts of social work. The path towards such a scenario has already been paved by the rising consciousness of religious and community-based approaches, which have challenged a universalist approach to social work. The basic idea here is that Islamic social work does not have to reinvent the wheel by starting where mainstream social work began taking its first steps in the late nineteenth century but could rather learn from its failures as well as its advances. Adopting a critical stance would help Islamic social work to avoid the misconceptions and missteps of mainstream Western social work. It would also provide Islamic social work with theoretical rigour in confronting the paternalistic or assimilationist tendencies in modernist social work trends. By bringing insights and experiences from a variety of Muslim majority contexts with different intellectual, theological and ethical traditions and merging these with the latest achievements of modern social work, concepts that are both culturally and religiously informed and emancipative can be developed. The contributions in this section discuss various aspects of such an alternative path and illustrate, from different perspectives that social work with Muslim clients, be it carried out by Muslims or non-Muslims, has to adopt approaches that are not necessarily included in the toolkit of mainstream social work.

Rojan Afrouz and Beth Crisp (chapter "Anti-oppressive Practice in Social Work with Women Wearing Hijab") focus on the conflictual topic of wearing *hijab* and discuss this issue in the context of anti-oppressive social work. This approach is comprised of a dialogue between different sets of values of social work agencies and their service users. *Jussra Schröer and Birsen Ürek* (chapter "Social Work and Muslim Welfare: A Women's Grassroots Association") present the case of a welfare provider which has been built up by Muslim women and addresses family issues. As a community initiative, it has gained full recognition and become part of a secular umbrella social work association. *Somaya Abdullah* (chapter "The Role of *tawba* (Repentance) in Social Work with Muslim Clients") explores the relevance of the Islamic concept of *tawba* (repentance) for social work and argues that it has considerable potential to motivate Muslims to reset their lives, as it helps them to achieve a new way of being in relation to others and to God. This reflects the use of Islamic

concepts in social work in an exemplary manner. *Sara Ashencaen Crabtree* (chapter "Islamic Principles, Inclusivity and Revitalisation in Conceptual Frameworks for Western Social Work") suggests that Islamic concepts and practices could go beyond the boundaries of Muslim communities to transform social work into a more nuanced, inclusive profession. In doing so, she draws on four terms with Islamic connotations and shows how a critical approach to social work can learn from such traditions. Finally, *Hansjörg Schmid and Amir Sheikhzadegan* (chapter "Quo Vadis, Islamic Social Work? Empirical Findings and Theoretical Reflections Converging Towards an Alternative Approach") look at convergences between empirical findings and theoretical reflections in the previous chapters, draw out some cross-references, and critically discuss the attributions linked to the term 'Islamic social work'.

The overall structure illustrates our approach to exploring Islamic social work as a range of phenomena: starting with empirical analyses which are sensitive to contextual and country-specific factors; moving on to theological and ethical reflections which try to link traditional discourse and contemporary thought; then locating the phenomena and reflections again within a broader general framework of social work with an outlook on alternative approaches. This broader perspective can enrich both the discussion of concrete cases and theological and ethical reflection. In this way, the three steps taken can be seen as a hermeneutical circle which must continue. In view of the limitations on certain examples and discourses, which are central to the discussion but inevitably cannot cover everything, this exploration of Islamic social work also acts as an invitation to think further.

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Part I
Target Groups and Contexts of Islamic Social Work

Helping Muslims or Contributing to Society? Insights into the Paradoxes of Islamic Social Work for the Excluded

Baptiste Brodard

Abstract In various European countries, Islamic social services have specifically targeted disadvantaged groups, including a high proportion of Muslims. This situation gives rise to a paradox: while Islamic organisations insist on impartiality and aim to benefit people regardless of their religious belonging, most of their investment addresses de facto Muslim communities. This paradox could firstly be explained by the overrepresentation of Muslims within excluded groups. While Islamic NGOs justify the delivery of most of their aid to Muslim countries by emergencies linked to geopolitical contexts, grassroots Islamic associations explain their focus on Muslim beneficiaries as being due to their underprivileged situation. In parallel, local authorities and statutory agencies, including those working in prisons, have begun to consider the need for Muslim protagonists to be involved in addressing specific issues and reaching particular groups. In this process, both individual Muslim social workers and Islamic organisations are increasingly expected to contribute their presumed cultural skills. This positioning causes tension within the authorities and statutory agencies, as they promote a neutral vision of social work while paradoxically fostering religious and cultural approaches for pragmatic reasons. Based on case studies of Islamic welfare organisations in Switzerland and France, this chapter aims to address the paradox of Muslims claiming to contribute to the common good while essentially providing their own 'community' with aid. It discusses the current challenges for Islamic bodies who try to position themselves in a 'universalist' social work approach, while they concretely implement community-based social services which seem to prioritise Muslims.

Keywords Charity · Islam · Muslim organisations · Social work · Welfare

Introduction

In the United Kingdom, it is argued that "social work now becomes simply one of a range of professional and occupational groups addressing the needs of the sector." (Hardwick & Worsley, 2007, 46) Henceforth, social work integrates informal

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services as well as organised welfare provision, and it involves both public and private bodies, among which faith-based organisations play an important role (Keller, 2016; Jawad, 2012). This community-based social work also applies to Muslims in North America and Western European countries, who have collectively organised themselves to provide both Muslims and non-Muslims with social welfare services, including material aid, education and counselling (Warden, 2013; Barylo, 2017). This social activism 'in the name of Islam' is manifold, differing from one context and set of stakeholders to another. However, some trends in the contemporary plural societies of the 'West' define it as a common and transnational phenomenon known as "Islamic social work" (Warden, 2013). Over the last decade, this phenomenon has significantly expanded in several Western European countries. In line with the definition of a faith-based organisation as "a social service agency which explicitly identifies with a religious tradition" (Crisp, 2014, 11), Islamic social work can be presented as a community-based involvement linked to Islam, either through religious references or the background of its staff. It involves an approach based on identity, which can be grounded in either religious or cultural features (Soulet, 2014). While it can be partisan and community-oriented by specifically targeting Muslims, it also regularly addresses the needs of non-Muslim recipients and claims impartiality and neutrality. In this regard, Islamic social work in Europe often aims to reach the wider society beyond community boundaries. Still, the issue of the partial or impartial orientation of this kind of social engagement remains largely unexplored. The research of Marie Juul Petersen (2014) is an important contribution in this field regarding the question of Muslim NGOs, but her conclusions are essentially limited to Islamic organisations providing humanitarian aid outside Europe.

Islamic Social Work in Plural Societies

Historically, Islamic social work has been linked to broader Islamic activism in society, often connected to the Muslim Brotherhood movement (Davis & Robinson, 2012). In this regard, it is crucial to understand the ideological and transnational rationale behind the social engagement of certain Islamic organisations (Kepel, 1987), which sociological studies on Islamic social work in Europe have often failed to do. These have often focused on local, concrete aspects, and unfortunately ignored ideological and theological links to religious movements (Borell & Gerdner, 2011; Barylo, 2017). Moreover, in Western European societies, in which Muslims are a minority, public engagement in the name of Islam certainly differentiates itself from the activism of Islamic movements within Muslim majority countries. Hence, the theses developed through research studies in Arab societies and other Muslim majority contexts cannot be applied to the European context, demonstrating the necessity of conducting new investigations instead of extrapolating the results of research from remote contexts.

In Western European countries, characterised by plural and non-Muslim majority societies, three phases can be identified to explain the rise of community-based

engagement in social work. Firstly, a number of Islamic transnational movements have initiated direct or indirect social activism through their association networks, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Kepel, 1987) and the Tabligh, even though the principal role of the latter remains restricted to proselytism (Arslan & Marlière, 2014). Secondly, numerous mosques and Islamic centres have begun to engage locally in counselling, welfare services, education and prevention of social problems. Unofficially, with no stated strategy, some of their members have become informal 'social workers' and counsellors, whose contributions have been deemed to compete with the statutory agencies, especially in distressed and segregated neighbourhoods (Bouzar, 2001). At this level, the counselling or welfare participation of these Muslims could be seen as a side effect of Islamic education, as Imams and Muslim leaders deliver religious talks which encourage young people to abandon delinquent behaviour deemed to be contrary to Islamic values (Barbey, 2007). Thirdly, independent Islamic associations specifically dedicated to social work have recently been created in various countries, including the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland. These are characterised by their autonomy from religious organisations and their focus on the practice of social work rather than religious discourses. Most of them cannot be ascribed to a specific theological current of Islam. This third phase constitutes an important shift in Islamic social work, today mostly embedded in these grassroots associations. Such Islamic organisations remain under-researched, although the monograph of Rosalind Warden (2013) and the case studies of William Barylo (2017) on grassroots Islamic associations which provide welfare services are valuable contributions: further in-depth research and reflection on this subject is required.

Islamic social work development in Western European countries has generally had two main starting points. Firstly, mosques and Muslim associations aimed to provide their own members with social care and counselling in line with their cultural and religious values and principles. For instance, they wanted Muslim women to be able to access social workers who would take into account their religious and cultural perspectives, in order to help them avoid possible prejudices in public institutions. While a need for cultural sensitivity has been highlighted in social work literature (Jawad, 2012; Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2008), as well as a need for spiritual awareness in practice (Loue, 2017), an approach which promotes integrationist or assimilationist views assumes that migrants and their offspring will abandon their cultural and religious background as they become integrated in the country (Hajjat, 2012). This type of approach shows a continued reluctance to integrate cultural and religious references into social work (Bouamama, 2002, 37). Secondly, the engagement of Muslims in aid and social work is a logical extension of Islamic activism (Hamid, 2016). In this regard, many would argue that according to mainstream contemporary Islamic teachings, Muslims have to serve humankind and contribute positively to their environment, which means helping both Muslims and non-Muslims (Dean & Khan, 1997; Krafess, 2005). For this reason, some mosques have launched social services and Muslims have set up independent associations which deliver a large set of social services (Warden, 2013; Banfi, 2015; Barylo, 2017). In parallel, social work practitioners in Western Europe and North America

increasingly integrate cultural, religious and spiritual aspects to their approach. It is assumed that cultural and religious belonging of the recipients needs to be understood and taken into account by professionals. Recently, the issue of 'Islamist radicalisation' has also highlighted an institutional need to integrate Muslim partners into social work (Sèze, 2015).

By definition, Islamic social work involves service providers who explicitly or implicitly identify with Islam. Depending on the Islamic centre or organisation, a wide range of services are delivered such as material aid, consultation, mediation, counselling and education. Sometimes, religious elements are combined with welfare provision: for instance, Muslim providers may pray along with the beneficiaries or distribute religious books to them. In many other cases, religious discourses and practices are strictly separated from welfare services. Furthermore, as in any other religion, the definition of target groups varies from one organisation to another: some focus on co-religionists, while others offer services to anyone, regardless of their cultural or religious background. In this regard, a predominant question linked to Islamic social work in Western societies concerns the dichotomy between two positions. On the one hand, Muslim organisations claim to contribute to the whole of society, regardless of religious or community concerns. On the other hand, Muslims are prioritised in receiving their aid, through a social work approach which can be considered as partisan and community-based. This paradox makes up a central question of my research: why do Islamic organisations which claim to deliver welfare services universally focus on Muslims in many instances?

The treatment of this question requires reflections on the study of empirical cases involving Islamic social work organisations in plural and non-Muslim majority societies. In my research, France and Switzerland are taken as examples.

Methodology

The paper is based on a combination of various sets of data. Firstly, my doctoral research (Brodard, 2020) focuses on Islamic organisations which provide social welfare services both to Muslims and non-Muslims in Switzerland. Access to these associations was possible using an ethnographic approach, which focused on gathering information beyond the official discourses of the interviewed stakeholders. In addition to semi-structured interviews, I conducted participant observation as well as informal interviews with leaders, volunteers and stakeholders. In sensitive fields often characterised by mistrust towards external observers, informal interviews were generally essential to obtain in-depth data, even if this often limited the possibility of recording interviews (Kaufmann, 2016). In this regard, anthropologists generally admit that concrete circumstances related to sensitive fields may force the researcher to go beyond classical methodology (Boumaza & Campana, 2007, 9). Hence, participant observation allowed me to follow volunteers and managers during internal meetings, outdoor events and social welfare activities. Secondly, I drew

on my previous professional experience in statutory social work agencies in Switzerland, principally in prisons, as a further source of data. This gave access to implicit information related to institutional strategies and practices, which could hardly have been explored otherwise. It also allowed me to conduct numerous informal interviews with detainees and the prison staff. This aspect refers to what some researchers have called "observant participation", instead of participant observation, insisting on the predominance of participation in contexts which imply the researcher's intensive involvement (Wacquant, 2010, 117; Soulé, 2007, 129–130). Thirdly, the peripheral case studies I conducted in France and in the United Kingdom (Brodard, 2019, 2020) enriched my analysis of the Swiss case. This kind of "multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus, 1995) allowed me to consider Islamic social work in non-Muslim majority societies from a transnational perspective, which is often necessary to perceive common issues linked to the problematic of this paper. Indeed, the global and transnational aspects of the subject require an expansion of the geographical and temporal boundaries of ethnographic research (Mueller, 2019, 29). In this respect, the researcher can benefit from long-term accumulated data collected through different personal or professional experiences (Burgat, 2016, 27–46; Truong, 2018, 81).

Based on this transversal approach the problematic will be explored through three case studies, highlighting the justifications of the organisations which prioritise Muslims while claiming to serve the common good. These cases will then lead to a discussion of this apparent dichotomy between discourse and practice.

Three Fields of Intervention: Prisons, Homelessness and 'Radicalisation'

Among Islamic social work initiatives in Western Europe, various cases illustrate the apparent dichotomy between a rhetoric of impartiality and neutrality in social work and a prioritisation of co-religionists in aid and welfare, more specifically in the field of social exclusion and resocialisation. Firstly, social services for prisoners show that Islamic organisations provide general welfare aid for any inmate regardless of religious affiliation, but also offer specific services to Muslims. Secondly, Islamic welfare organisations involved in social round-ups to help the homeless in Paris promote the values of neutrality and impartiality, while in practice they focus on neighbourhoods and areas where a majority of Muslim migrants gather. Thirdly, some Islamic associations have developed an intracultural approach to social work: their staff use their cultural or religious background to target specific groups and to address issues related to Islam, Muslims or ethnic communities. The following sections will develop on each of these three aspects, coalescing in the third section into a transversal analysis.

Engagement of Islamic Organisations in Prisons: Social Work and Religious Services

Prisons in several Western European countries are currently widely recognised as having a significant number of Muslim detainees. In Switzerland, some prisons count between 40% and 50% of Muslims (Canton de Vaud, 2016, 75), while they make up only about 5.5% of the local population (Tunger-Zanetti & Purdie, 2020, 625). In France, even higher rates can be found in the prisons of Parisian suburbs (Khosrokhavar, 2016; Micheron, 2020). British prisons also count a disproportionate percentage of Muslim inmates, although fewer than in France and Switzerland (Beckford et al., 2005, 97–98). Sociologically, this situation can be explained by the fact that Muslims are over-represented in socially excluded areas such as deprived neighbourhoods or vulnerable groups, including illegal migrants. In recent years, the strong presence of Islam in prisons has raised concerns related to security issues and violent extremism. In contrast to the North American context, where Islam in prisons has also been highlighted as a means of rehabilitation (Ling, 2017; Al Jazeera English, 2009), apprehension about 'the Muslim question' in European prisons has essentially been embedded in security concerns and questions regarding the mitigation of violent extremism (Khosrokhavar, 2016). However, this concern aside, Islam in prison is also approached pragmatically, from the point of view of managing the prison system: here, the objective is to maintain peace as far as possible and to avoid any conflicts (Beckford, 2015). In this regard, Muslim representatives such as chaplains or associations are welcome to provide services in many prisons. However, their actions are restricted by conditions which vary between prisons and national contexts and have therefore to be negotiated.

In France, the Islamic association LIFE was active in prisons, delivering Islamic books and offering correspondence between volunteers and inmates. At the time, the main idea was to assist and support Muslim inmates, until its access to prisons was finally denied. Nevertheless, the NGO *Secours Islamique France* (SIF, Islamic Relief France) was still acting in French prisons 10 years later, without facing any institutional opposition. In parallel, Imams visit many French prisons as Muslim chaplains. Their role as a potential way of countering violent extremism has been highlighted (Birt, 2006). In the United Kingdom, the role of Muslim chaplains is particularly encouraged through civil society organisations, such as the Feltham Community Chaplaincy Trust (Beckford, 2015, 26). In addition, Muslim associations provide ex-detainees with welfare services and moral support upon their release from detention (Irfan, 2022). In Switzerland, despite a very high proportion of Muslim inmates, the role of Muslim protagonists in supporting detainees or ex-offenders remains more subtle and discreet. The *Service d'Aide Sociale Islamique* (SASI, Islamic Social Assistance Service) is one of the rare Muslim organisations which have been involved in this field, albeit in a subdued manner. In parallel, Muslim chaplains also offer their services in various prisons across the country.

SASI provides a wide range of welfare services including soup kitchens, food pantries for the needy, roaming food distributions in the streets to address the needs

of the homeless, as well as French courses, counselling and informal solidarity actions. In all its projects, SASI insists on its impartiality and neutrality. It claims to be apolitical and religiously neutral, and that it delivers aid to anyone regardless of their religious or cultural affiliations. Indeed, there are many non-Muslims among its beneficiaries and no evidence of partiality has so far been reported in its various actions and projects. However, SASI originates from the social service of the Islamic Centre of Geneva (*Centre Islamique de Genève*), which is ideologically close to the Muslim Brotherhood movement and previously focused its social engagement toward its own members (Banfi, 2013). Due to this history, SASI's modest involvement in prisons remains linked to the Islamic centre and mainly focuses on informal social services for ex-prisoners.

In 2015, the main prison of the Canton of Geneva was lacking clothes to distribute to needy detainees. Having learned of this issue, the SASI leader decided to organise the distribution of clothes in the prison, which was carried out by prison staff without regard for the religious or cultural affiliations of the recipients. This ad hoc action illustrates an engagement with a social purpose which addresses the needs of both Muslims and non-Muslims. During the same period, SASI was contacted by some detainees from the same prison to provide religious books, prayer timetables, carpets and other religious items. The responses to these requests from a social work organisation shows the frequent intersection between religious and social services in Islamic organisations. A third illustration of SASI's engagement in the prison context concerns a case in which ex-detainees requested emergency aid. Upon their release from detention, some former prisoners of Muslim background went to SASI to ask for food, phone calls, money, or a place to sleep. Some of them also requested advice and support. For instance, a man who came from Guinea but was resident in Portugal explained to SASI's leader that according to a judicial decision, he was supposed to leave the country right away, but that he had no money to pay for his bus trip back home. SASI agreed to grant him financial aid. It is noteworthy that only Muslims or people with a Muslim background would go to SASI to request support. Non-Muslim ex-detainees could have requested and benefited from the same welfare service, but it never happened. Firstly, SASI was then based in an Islamic centre. Secondly, the information that SASI would offer support may have only circulated amongst Muslims in the prison. Finally, non-Muslims may have thought that they could not access such services, and nobody explained otherwise to them. This trend therefore illustrates the fact that an Islamic social work organisation may aim or at least claim to provide welfare services to the whole society regardless of religious affiliations of the beneficiaries, but in practice, it attracts or targets almost exclusively Muslims. To some extent, this case resonates with a SIF project during the month of Ramadan prisons around Paris. The humanitarian NGO delivers meals for Iftar to detainees, composed of dates and other traditional dishes. Apparently, this action was implemented to support Muslim detainees who were fasting while being incarcerated. However, the meals were officially addressed to anyone on a volunteer basis, regardless of the recipient's religion. This approach highlights an ambivalent position which combines a universal and neutral approach and appearance and a social practice de facto oriented towards Muslims

and a religious motivation. Similar logics have been noticed in Muslim associations engaged in round-ups to feed the homeless in France.

Within Swiss prisons, detainees have access to both social work services and chaplaincy, which are independent from each other. Social work statutory organisations provide welfare services including administrative assistance, translation, facilitating contact with the family and lawyers, 'psychological' support and counselling. In most prisons, the inmates also have access to chaplains, who are mostly Christian. Either Catholic or Protestant chaplains meet detainees regardless of religious affiliation. Confidentially, the detainees do not only talk about topics related to religion or spirituality, but on whatever questions they wish to address. Therefore, institutional social workers' services and chaplains' contributions sometimes overlap. In some cases, for instance, chaplains counsel detainees on social and administrative issues, in parallel with the social workers. At the same time, social workers increasingly address 'religious' topics with Muslim detainees, which is explained by the 'prevention of radicalisation' which became a priority, particularly during the months following the 2015 terrorist attacks in France. Hence, the difference between institutional social work and chaplaincy services is not always clear, and both occasionally tend to address the same issues. In Switzerland, question of integration is central in public debates (Gianni, 2016) and influences expectations of Muslim chaplains in prisons. However, they do not provide services in all Swiss prisons. In the country's biggest prison, Muslim inmates, who represent more than half of the prison population (FNS, 2011), only have access to Christian chaplains, whom most of them accept to meet. An Imam only comes to conduct Friday prayers, and prisoners do not have any direct access to him. However, in the Cantons of Fribourg, Vaud, and Zurich, the Imam has extended access to the prison and to inmates. On a volunteer basis, he frequently meets inmates and provides them with religious guidance, as well as moral and social support. Since the 'jihadist' attacks in Europe, public authorities have expressed an increasing interest in collaborating with Imams and Muslim chaplains (Birt, 2006, 72). In Switzerland, this trend has been particularly noticeable since the French terrorist attacks of 2015.

To conclude, the involvement of Islamic organisations in European prisons remains uncertain and not very organised. Whereas many acknowledge the need for an Islamic presence in prisons, more particularly in the field of chaplaincy and in the prevention of violent extremism, most of the community-based engagement is still sporadic and lacks professionalism.

Muslim Associations Providing Aid to the Homeless in Paris

Since 2008, many new independent associations have been created by Muslims, mainly focused on providing meals and other items to the homeless in Paris and its suburbs. Their leaders claim to act 'for the sake of God', to help people in need. They provide aid regardless of religious and ethnical affiliations and seem not to

have hidden objectives behind their welfare services. In practice, they serve meals to homeless people in specific areas of Paris in which a lot of (illegal) migrants are concentrated. Most beneficiaries come from predominantly Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan. Others are from North and West African countries. However, there are also French, Roma and Eastern European people who benefit from these aid organisations.

Broadly speaking, some 80% of the beneficiaries are Muslims; in some locations it is even more. Nonetheless, the Muslim associations do not specifically target Muslims. They explain that they try to meet the needs of the most vulnerable population, and that the latter is often composed of migrants coming from Muslim countries. Many of these organisations adapt their welfare services during the month of Ramadan by providing meals at the times when practicing Muslims are supposed to eat. Distributions are thus organised at sunset, which, in the summertime, is particularly late. They also increase the frequency of their social round-ups (i.e. once weekly during the year and once to twice daily during the month of Ramadan). As both these features show an adaptation of welfare programs to the religious needs of Muslims, they could be seen by some as community-based approaches taking into account the specific needs of practicing Muslims. However, the prioritisation of Muslims is here simply justified by their visible presence in areas of exclusion. An Islamic Relief representative in Switzerland gave a similar explanation when he was asked why the NGO mainly operates in Muslim countries. He responded that in the current world, Muslims were those who suffered the most and who were greatly afflicted by poverty, social issues and humanitarian crises. Islamic NGOs as well as grassroots associations commonly use this argument to justify their focus on Muslim recipients instead of on other communities. Nevertheless, the *Secours Islamique France* (SIF), the NGO which was launched following the split with Islamic Relief Worldwide, advertises its neutrality and impartiality. In 2010, its campaign in the Paris metro highlighted the following announcement: "*La souffrance n'a ni origine, ni religion, ni genre. La solidarité non plus. Œuvrons ensemble pour un monde solidaire*." ("Suffering has no origin, no religion, no gender. Neither does solidarity. Let us work together for a world of solidarity.") In this way, Islamic organisations can promote a discourse of universal approach of social work and aid, while concretely prioritising Muslims, arguing that they are more disadvantaged and affected by social issues.

Beyond the homelessness issue, Islamic associations in France have focused on youth in segregated urban areas (Kokoreff, 2009), for instance the *Jeunes Musulmans de France* JMF in France, which has links to the Muslim Brotherhood (De Lavergne, 2003), and other more independent associations (Kapko, 2007). Often combining social services with religious education, they explain their investment in specific urban areas simultaneously by their underprivileged status and their high Muslim population.

Intracultural Social Work to Tackle 'Radicalisation' among Young Muslims

In a small town of the United Kingdom, Kumon Y'All, a Muslim charity, aims to facilitate mutual understanding between young Muslims and other inhabitants and institutions, in order to prevent both violent extremism and racism. To do so, it gives young Muslims a hub in which they can express their views in a safe space. Founded in Savile Town, an area of Dewsbury which is inhabited by a predominantly Muslim population from a Pakistani background, the charity's objective is to promote peace and social cohesion between neighbourhood youngsters and populations in other locations, while preventing both racism against Muslims and violent extremism linked to Islam. Furthermore, Kumon Y'All implements social projects which mostly aim to build bridges between communities, namely between Muslims from the Indian subcontinent and the local 'White' British. For instance, it has organised football matches between the army and local young people in order to enhance mutual understanding. Finally, this intracultural activism is supposed to prevent violent extremism by accompanying young Muslims in their quest for a balance between their cultural background and their British identity. Furthermore, the association seeks to foster counter-discourses against religious 'radicalisation' by talking freely about Islam, an issue that a non-Muslim organisation could not tackle.

This type of social work approach can also be found in Switzerland with *Tasamouh*, an association launched by a Muslim woman in order to tackle violent extremism among youth. *Tasamouh* was created as a project in 2016 to address the religious 'radicalisation' of young Muslims in the city of Biel/Bienne. The association members meet with youths who show signs of 'radicalisation' or, more frequently, who simply suffer from identity crises. Mediation and counselling sessions with these youngsters often include their family. Furthermore, they provide counselling and guidance to other social work agencies. Although *Tasamouh* was designed to focus on 'radicalisation', its concrete social work then also began to address social issues such as addiction, violence and family problems. In most of its cases, there is no relation to religious extremism or Islam, even if many recipients face identity challenges due to their cross-cultural background.

Both Kumon Y'All in the United Kingdom and *Tasamouh* in Switzerland promote a community-based and intracultural approach, in which the cultural and religious commonalities between the staff of the association and its beneficiaries are supposed to lead to a greater relevance of counselling, mediation and social work. This approach matches with what has been either called intra-ethnic social work (Jovelin, 2002) or intracultural practice (Shulman, 2011), which refers to social workers sharing a common cultural or ethnic background with their clients or recipients. In the American context, Lawrence Shulman has widened the concept of intracultural practice to include, for example, the sharing of a similar minority status, such as the same sexual orientation (Shulman, 2011, 326). While some point out the benefit and added value of this approach, others argue that it can lead to various issues, including a lack of distance between practitioners and clients (Yan,

2008). Nevertheless, this approach remains significant not only in Anglo-Saxon societies but also European countries, although in French-speaking contexts, community-based actions are often considered with suspicion.

The development of intracultural approaches within these associations cannot be explained only by the views and preferences of their leaders. Rather, they are an echo of the current context of Western European countries. In Switzerland, as well as in other Western European countries, Islamic centres and organisations are often expected to address issues allegedly concerning Muslims and Islam. For instance, the British state incorporates Islamic organisations in its counter-terrorism strategies, as illustrated in the following extract from a report by the Islamic associations An-Nisa Society and Radical Middle Way: "some Muslim organisations did get funding, but most of this was geared towards countering extremism and was not designed for the meeting of the holistic needs of the community." (An-Nisa Society & Radical Middle Way, 2012, 16) In this regard, some organisations try to position themselves as experts in preventing violent extremism. In addition, they promote specific projects focusing on target groups, including migrant Muslim women or young people from a North African background. In all these circumstances, Muslim organisations are likely to promote an intracultural approach to social work.

Finally, the intracultural approaches promoted by various Islamic organisations in Europe stem from a quest for added value, which could lead to funding and partnership opportunities. In this regard, they may rather be motivated by strategic concerns than ideological or religious views. However, the intracultural skills of Muslim organisations can also be instrumentalised by statutory institutions for their own agendas, related to tackling specific social issues and 'integrating' social groups. In such cases, the contribution of Muslim protagonists could be reduced to 'pacification' and mediation, which is a common risk identified in the intracultural practice of social work (Billion, 2008; Boucher, 2012).

The Reasons behind the Focus on Muslims: Ideologies or Strategies?

The few examples mentioned in the previous section show that several Islamic organisations providing social welfare services tend to claim they work with impartiality, adopting a universalist approach, while actually offering most of their services to Muslim people. These empirical illustrations present some interesting information in relation to the question mentioned in the introduction: why do Islamic organisations, that claim to deliver welfare services universally, focus on Muslims in many cases? Globally, various explanations can be identified.

As a prelude, it is important to note that ideological factors and religious norms can be used to justify divergent strategies and conducts, even though all may claim to be in line with 'Islamic tradition'. Religious discourses regarding aid beneficiaries and welfare activities can promote both partial and neutral views. Concretely,

Muslims can find references in religious literature that promote universal charity, but also legitimate community prioritisation or a preference for co-religionists (Topbaş, 2009). As it can go both ways, religious discourses are not always relevant to understanding the positions of Muslim protagonists. Rather, the construction of religious narratives often stems from the organisations' strategies as well as the socio-political context (Petersen, 2014). In this regard, religious discourses may be used to legitimate a practice rather than to decide what can be done. Nevertheless, general views of Islam are also likely to orient a global approach to social welfare and religious work. According to their understanding of Islam, some Muslim activists favour proselytism and community-based social work, while others promote an impartial approach to aid. In parallel, some argue for altruistic welfare and aid without any underpinning strategic views, while others emphasise an additional agenda, through objectives such as proselytising Islam or empowering the 'Muslim community'. Moreover, numerous Islamic organisations combine social welfare activities with religious work, which tends to enhance the focus on Muslims. On one hand, these organisations propose welfare services to tackle various issues and to meet the needs of recipients, regardless of religious affiliations. On the other, they respond to the religious needs of Muslim recipients by providing them with religious items or advice. This overlapping between religious services and social work often leads to special attention for Muslims and a higher concern for their needs. However, most Islamic social work organisations internally differentiate between the two kinds of engagements and do not generally proselytise people unless they express an interest in Islam, and social welfare services do not provide support in a certain area. Indeed, the overlap between engagements mainly reflects a lack of resources and functions accumulated by the same people and organisations, which do not usually have the means to separate the kinds of services they provide, as most are involved in both welfare and religious services at the same time.

Beyond these ideological and religious concerns, the overrepresentation of Muslims in excluded areas is mentioned by Muslim organisations as a reason why they focus on specific geographical areas or target groups (section "Overrepresentation of Muslims in Excluded Areas"). Moreover, the prioritisation of Muslim beneficiaries can be motivated by strategic considerations. In specific contexts, an intracultural approach to social work leads to better funding opportunities (section "Prioritising Muslims for Strategic Reasons").

Overrepresentation of Muslims in Excluded Areas

A common narrative of Islamic organisations points to the fact that Muslims are overrepresented within excluded groups, such as illegal migrants and the homeless, asylum seekers, refugees, prisoners and unemployed youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

For welfare organisations that focus on the alleviation of poverty and exclusion, homelessness is often the most obvious area of engagement. It represents the peak of poverty and exclusion and makes misery visible in many cities across Western European countries. The homeless population is heterogeneous and varies depending on the urban context. In Paris, illegal migrants are dominant among homeless groups in the northern areas of the city, and many of them are Muslims. Islamic organisations providing welfare services intervene in those areas and therefore reach mostly Muslims. However, they explain their focus on these areas by the significant social need for assistance and the high concentration of poverty, not by the religious or cultural identities of the recipients. While they provide aid to migrants and refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria, they also help non-Muslims, such as the Roma and other Europeans. The sole explanation given by these Muslim protagonists about the choice of the fields of intervention is the argument regarding social needs. Conversely, InTouch Foundation, a Muslim charity in Bradford in the United Kingdom, mostly addresses the needs of homeless people with a European background. In Geneva, the SASI serves a majority of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, most of whom originate from Muslim countries. Here as well, the rationale points to the social needs of beneficiaries and denies any community partisanship.

Furthermore, the overrepresentation of Muslims in excluded areas mainly concerns detainees in Western European prisons, which often count a percentage of Muslim inmates far superior to the general Muslim population. As a result, Islam is likely to be deemed as a problem or even a cause of this situation. However, this important gap can be explained by sociological factors and even legal aspects. In the Paris area, a dominant percentage of prisoners are youths from deprived housing projects in the region, which often bring together a predominance of people from North African and West African backgrounds. As a result, most of the inmates are Muslims as well (Khosrokhavar, 2016). In this context, some Islamic organisations have developed an interest in intervening in prisons and offering religious or social services to inmates.

Finally, numerous Islamic associations focus on youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, often affected by unemployment and inactivity. Especially in France, a significant proportion of the inhabitants in deprived housing projects are from a Muslim background. Over the last few decades, Islam has become a part of local suburban cultures. While some youths have been involved in Islamic practices, there are others who have simultaneously been exposed to religious discourses, without necessarily following their norms (Beaud & Amrani, 2004). In both cases, the proximity between Islam and the subculture of these neighbourhoods has created fertile ground for the affirmation of Muslim bodies' leadership, including in social work (Bouzar, 2001). The overrepresentation of Muslims in excluded areas and segregated neighbourhoods can therefore be used as a justification for the focus of Islamic associations on specific groups and areas, especially in contexts where Muslims are particularly affected by exclusion and social issues.

Prioritising Muslims for Strategic Reasons

Far from ideological factors, the prioritisation of Muslims by Islamic welfare organisations is frequently driven by strategical considerations. Identity-based social work and intracultural approaches regularly lead to better funding opportunities and to partnerships being fostered by statutory organisations and civil society associations.

In the context of non-Muslim majority societies, Islamic bodies are often expected to deal with 'their' own issues and people. Concretely, some public institutions encourage Islamic organisations to get involved in the prevention of violent extremism. Moreover, some fund projects that target specific groups, such as Muslim migrant females or youngsters with a North African background. The underlying assumption is that Islamic organisations' added value is specifically linked to the religious and cultural backgrounds of their staff, who are allegedly considered as being closer to the recipients and therefore more inclined to understand them and to communicate efficiently with them. The risk of such an assumption is an essentialisation of cultural, religious and ethnic features, by assigning a reified identity to the concerned parties. Paradoxically enough, these Muslim 'social workers' promoting an intracultural approach also aim to serve society as a whole and to extend their engagement to non-Muslims. Yet, for pragmatic reasons, they design projects targeting specific groups (i. e. migrant women, Muslim girls wearing 'Islamic' clothes, Syrian refugees, and so on) or specific issues (i. e. violent extremism linked to Islam or Islamophobia) as they know that they are more likely to be well-funded and to obtain a public and institutional recognition. Nevertheless, they also try to be recognised and accepted as 'social workers' for wider issues and therefore to compete with other bodies of mainstream social work, which is often much more difficult. Indeed, some public institutions and civil society organisations in Switzerland argue that the added value of Muslim organisations stands in their capacity to reach specific target groups and to develop relationships with them, whereas the state may be seen as illegitimate or at least viewed with suspicion. Moreover, it is argued that Muslim protagonists have the capacity to mobilise cultural and religious references to deal with specific sociocultural issues and even to counter extremist tendencies and narratives. To that extent, they are regarded as precious resources for the state. This is why the state occasionally instrumentalises their skills for its benefit, as several researchers have already remarked (Duret, 1996; Birt, 2006; Boucher, 2012). It can be argued that these partnerships foster a tendency for the state to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims by trying to identify reliable Islamic organisations – a tendency which would consequently lead to an exclusion of other Muslim stakeholders (Mamdani, 2002).

So far, most Islamic social work organisations seem to have failed to implement broader social services which would benefit the whole society, with a couple of exceptions in the area of food distribution. Instead, they focus on specific areas in order to build partnerships and to obtain funding, particularly in Switzerland (Brodard, 2019). In this regard, their intracultural approach and community-based

social work practices are more influenced by strategical considerations than ideological or religious positions. In other words, Islamic social work organisations try to find their place among different welfare service providers by highlighting their cultural and religious competencies. By claiming such an added value, they wish to achieve greater recognition and inclusion.

Finally, although this strategic stance has allowed Islamic organisations to access partnerships, funding opportunities and public recognition, it has also restricted their engagement in society beyond certain limited fields, thus preventing their confirmation as mainstream social work bodies. At this point, despite their claims of providing impartial and neutral social work, Islamic organisations have mainly invested in intracultural and community-based social services prioritising co-religionists. For many, their added value appears when they work on religious and cultural issues concerning Muslims and Islam. Most donations from public and private institutions fund projects which align with these specific areas, which indirectly encourages Islamic organisations to specialise in intracultural and community-based approaches to social work. Therefore, the paradox opposing the dominant norms of neutrality and impartiality to the intracultural perspective seems to stem, at least partially, from the intracultural approach promoted by a number of Islamic organisations in their quest for added value in their social engagement.

Conclusion

Over recent years, Islamic organisations in France and Switzerland have largely developed a narrative which insists on their impartiality and neutrality, resonating with the secularist system's expectations, which consider faith-based activism in the public sphere with suspicion (Vincent, 1997). However, in practice, they still address most of their services to Muslim groups. The tension or contradiction results from social discourse, which on the one hand constructs Muslims as a problem, and on the other, sets high expectations for their social contribution. To overcome this apparent contradiction, some would highlight the fact that specific Muslim groups are more likely to be affected by social issues, which legitimates the focus on them and their prioritisation. This argument then justifies the investment of Muslim organisations in specific areas, predominantly inhabited by 'poor' Muslims, as well as in specific groups, such as Muslim female migrants or young people from segregated neighbourhoods. In this sense, the context clearly determines which groups are targeted and how community welfare services are oriented. By extension, it can be argued that Islamic social work also contributes to society even when it focuses on Muslim groups, insofar as they are considered more affected by social problems than the average population. In this regard, helping Muslim groups also means contributing to the wider society, as Muslims are part of this and frequently subject to social problems and exclusion. As Muslims are citizens of European countries, distinguishing between them and non-Muslims fosters a "solitarist approach to human identity" (Sen, 2006), in which religious affiliation constitutes the main feature. To

avoid the reinforcement of these solitaristic religious identities, Islamic social work may still have to assume a universalist approach which goes beyond its own religious identity.

Furthermore, while in a broader sense religious and ideological narratives can promote both neutral and partial approaches to aid and welfare, the strategic perspectives of Islamic organisations have led them de facto to invest in intracultural social work, especially in Switzerland. Hence, the reasons and motivations behind community-based social work stem from strategic rather than ideological aspects (Brodard, 2020). The fact that many Islamic organisations claim to deliver welfare services to everyone regardless of their cultural and religious affiliation reflects their general views of social work in most cases and corresponds to their religious guidelines. The fact that in real terms they prioritise or favour Muslims in their social work remains a strategic matter, which is embedded in the social context and linked to opportunities for funding and partnership. On various occasions, focusing on Muslims has allowed Islamic organisations to claim they provide added value and to establish themselves as key stakeholders. However, if given the means, many of these organisations would be inclined to contribute to society as a whole and ultimately promote a neutral and impartial social work approach. Therefore, being limited to fixed cultural or religious identities as social workers seems to stem more from external allocation, both from statutory institutions and in public debates, than from the deliberate will of Muslim activists to inhabit religious and cultural narratives in their social work practice.

Finally, Islamic organisations insisting on impartiality and neutrality is certainly in line with external sociopolitical expectations: the deontology of social work, as well as the values promoted by the state, expect social welfare providers to help anybody, regardless of identity-based concerns. In this regard, it could be argued that Islamic organisations have internalised these norms according to the political context. This does not mean that Islamic organisations exclude non-Muslims from their social projects. Rather, it means that most of them have essentially developed projects designed to address specific needs of Muslims, and not designed their social services to actively include other social groups. This inclusion would have required a deeper reflection on approaches to the broader population and on strategies to reach non-Muslims. It can be assumed that the promotion of inclusive, wide-reaching social welfare activism which goes beyond community boundaries requires reflection and practices beyond the sole declarations of intent and discourses of openness. That said, the investment of Muslim organisations in social work has fostered their role as a bridge between the state and the service users. On one hand, they allow statutory organisations to access service users through mediation and accurate communication. On the other, they accompany service users in their integration process and enhance their relationship with the local society. In this regard, Muslim protagonists' contribution to social work goes far beyond community empowerment to promote integration within specific target groups which the state has often failed to reach through its own projects.

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The Religious Community: A Space that Facilitates Successful Resettlement for Muslim Offenders

Lamia Irfan

Abstract The religious community can play an important role in providing tangible and intangible support for offenders to help them reintegrate into society after serving a prison sentence. Using data drawn from life story interviews with 17 Muslim male offenders in England and Wales, this chapter outlines the different ways in which the religious community plays a crucial role in the reintegration journey after release from prison. Tangible support provided by a religious community can include help with housing and employment, two key concerns for offenders upon release from prison. Furthermore, the religious community provides important intangible support, which is crucial for reintegration after the degradation and stigma associated with imprisonment. This intangible support includes strong social bonds within the community which are based on reciprocal relationships. Acceptance by spiritual and community leaders can act as a redemption ritual which allows offenders to break from their negative past and develop a new positive identity. The community can also support the move away from crime by providing a moral environment which engenders a respect for the law. Along with this, civic engagement and contributing positively within a community fulfils important generative impulses which are part of identity development. Tangible, as well as intangible, support plays an important role in helping offenders manage the delicate transition back into society, which is usually fraught with challenges, as well as possibilities.

Keywords Resettlement · Muslim offenders · Religious community · Rehabilitation · Post-release

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Introduction

Religious charities have historically played an important role in supporting offender reintegration upon release from prison (Vanstone, 2004, 1–18). The earliest support programmes for offenders leaving prison were voluntary and run by religious and other charities. In England this role was formalised through the 1907 probation legislation and the missionaries providing voluntary support were given formal status as officers of the court; this later developed into the role of the probation officer. Thus, the impetus of supporting the re-entry into society of offenders upon release from prison is influenced by humane religious ideas of providing support during periods of hardship and offering offenders a point of contact within a community based on empathy and commitment (Vanstone, 2004, 2).

However, in contemporary times, the role of religious communities in providing support to members dealing with the challenges associated with resettlement after release from prison is often overlooked within the policy domain. In popular discourse, minority religious communities are seen as insular and at odds with broader society (Runnymede, 2017). This is particularly relevant with regard to perceptions about Muslim religious communities in Europe. In this chapter, I discuss some of the ways in which Muslim religious communities can play an important role in supporting ex-prisoners in their journey towards desistance from crime. Though often not professional social work, this can be understood as informal social work. I use the life story accounts of 17 Muslim offenders convicted of different criminal offences to show the ways in which their ties within a religious community were key elements in their resettlement after their release from prison and shift away from crime.

The article starts by discussing literature on the re-entry of offenders after they have served their prison sentence. In particular, the process of desisting from crime and the factors that can help in successfully maintaining a life free from crime after release from prison are considered. The article then moves on to outline the methodological approach adopted for this research. Finally, the data findings and conclusions are presented.

State of the Research

Resettlement and Reintegration

Re-integration and resettlement are two central concerns with regard to offenders' after-prison experiences; however, these terms are misleading, as they are based on assumptions that prisoners have a level of integration and are settled before entering prison. The pre-prison life experiences of offenders suggest a different picture: offenders' lives are largely tumultuous and chaotic with severe social as well as economic deficits (Farrington, 2000a, 2003). After conviction, these deficits only

increase through the added layer of stigma, shame, negative social learning from the prison environment, and social exclusion due to the new status as a convicted criminal (Maruna, 2014). The low levels of social and economic capital that offenders have before prison shrink further once they have been convicted. It is therefore not surprising that almost 28.8% of all offenders will return to prison within 2 years (Russel Webster, 2020); this figure is higher (39.2%) for young offenders as well (62.2%) for those serving short sentences (less than 12 months). However, the age-crime curve also shows that a majority of offenders will eventually desist from crime completely (Maruna, 2001, 6). This makes the period after release from prison particularly important from a crime control perspective, as there is potential both for desistance and continued or increased offending. This also makes the post-release period one fraught with challenges as well as possibilities. A key concern from a public protection perspective is whether individuals who have previously been involved in crime can successfully transition away from this involvement. Thus, a crucial aspect of successful reintegration and resettlement is long-term desistance from involvement in crime.

Moving on from purely punitive concerns, criminological research as well as criminal justice policy interventions have sought to understand the factors that lead to involvement in crime and equally importantly the factors that can lead to a move away from crime. In most Western democracies, evidence-based approaches to crime reduction that focus on risk factors and need assessment of offenders have become the predominant paradigm in offender management (Bonta, 2002; Farrington, 2000a, 2000b; Latessa & Lovins, 2010). Risk factor and need analysis look at psycho-social factors and deficits which are common in the background of individuals who become involved in crime. These approaches have no doubt brought a degree of rigour in understanding the reform process. However, the predominantly quantitative nature of these studies that focus on large scale evaluations and meta-analysis tend to obscure the importance of the local context in which the individual exists and takes decisions.

The use of autobiographical narrative helps offset this imbalance by focusing on the individual, and research approaches that focus on the life stories of offenders are well established in criminological research (Becker, 1973; Laub & Sampson, 2005; Shaw, 1966). The narrative approach has been used within criminological research to explain trajectories of desistence and criminality amongst groups of juvenile delinquents (Laub & Sampson, 2005). Life stories told by the offender help to unpick the social factors that lead to criminality, along with looking at the impact that involvement with criminal justice has on future criminality and social connection (Shaw, 1966). These stories also outline the influence and importance of human agency in making sense of the social and in orientating behaviour and making choices (Laub & Sampson, 2005).

Individual experience and biographies are seen as a key through which to unlock the historical and structural milieu in which the biographies unfold. Such approaches therefore allow us to better understand the whole, by focusing in detail on key parts of the whole (Becker, 1973; Rustin, 2000). They implicitly assume the micro-macro linkages that exist between the experiences of individuals and the broader social

environment. A life story approach which is centred on the micro level is well-suited to uncover and outline the meso-level causal mechanisms that make explicit the mutual impact of the micro and macro-level (Chamberlayne et al., 2000). Furthermore, as Shadd Maruna (2001) shows in his seminal book on how offenders reform, this context and an individual's self-understanding play a critical part in the journey towards desistance from crime.

Desistance from Crime and the Redemption Script

Maruna (2001) describes desistance as a process of keeping away from criminal activities despite facing obstacles and challenges in everyday life. Desistance is a process which requires understanding how individuals who have committed crimes in the past change, and continue to maintain crime-free behaviour (Maruna, 2001, 26). He suggests that ex-offenders frame their criminal past and their commitment to a future free of crime through the use of a 'redemption script'. The redemption script has three main elements: it emphasises a 'core' positive identity; reinforces a strong sense of personal control over future actions; and focuses on 'generativity' – the desire to contribute positively to future generations (Maruna, 2001, 148).

Redemption, from the Latin term *redimere* meaning 'buy back', derives from a religious understanding of making atonement for wrongdoing or sins. The redemption script helps offenders to make sense of their past in a way which allows them to move forward positively. Given the religious nature of redemption, one crucial question would be whether religious communities could function as bridges which would help the offenders to move away from crime and to develop a positive identity in their post-release lives.

The Role of Post-Release Relationships

Weaver and McNeill (2014) have highlighted the important role played by family, religious community, work and friendship groups in facilitating changes in identity and a desistance from crime. They suggest that relationships based on reciprocity are important in fostering change that leads to desistance from crime. The role of a 'wounded healer' was particularly important in this regard (Eglash, 1958; LeBel, 2007, 2009; LeBel et al., 2015). Wounded healer is a term drawn from the work by Carl Jung (1951) and refers to the importance of the therapist introspecting and healing their internal wounds while helping a client through psychotherapy (Eglash, 1958, 237). This term is also used by Alcoholics Anonymous whereby recovering alcoholics can mentor and support others who are on a similar journey. Such reciprocal relationships help breakdown the stigma of a troubled past and to move towards a positive life based on dedication to self and others. For ex-offenders who

have moved away from crime, helping others avoid similar pitfalls can be an important reinforcement of their commitment to desistance.

Methodology

Autobiographic Narrative Interviews

This research used religious biographies as the means through which to understand the processual creation of social identity amongst Muslim offenders in England and Wales. It followed an oral life story approach, which aimed to collect retrospective, as well as current, information about the significance and role of religion in the lives of the research participants. As discussed earlier, the use of autobiographical narrative is well established in criminological research (Becker, 1973; Laub & Sampson, 2005; Shaw, 1966).

There are however certain limitations to adopting this methodology. The small sample used for this research limits the generalisability of the research findings to a wider context. Life story narratives are also seen as dependent on context. The methodology acknowledges that the life story elicited through such an approach is influenced by the relationship of the researcher and the participant (Harrison, 2009; Kakuru & Paradza, 2007). Nevertheless, through purposeful sampling, the research has attempted to provide in-depth and detailed information about the practice and meaning of faith to Muslim ex-prisoners from different ethnicities, age groups and neighbourhoods.

Sampling

Choosing cases for detailed case studies, as required in life story research, involves a cross-case comparison. I needed to carefully consider the demographic and other characteristics that I wanted to include in the study. I therefore paid particular attention to collecting in-depth information from a purposeful sample that had the characteristics which would allow for a diverse cross case comparison while still maintaining the depth of detail and richness of engagement allowed for by a case study method.

Research with marginalised and hard to access groups prioritises convenience in sampling and data collection. In this project, access has been one of the most challenging aspects of the research process. As the research model relied on conducting more than one interview, maintaining contact for follow up interviews further added to the difficulties of the sampling process. I started with a larger sample of 21, however meaningful data was drawn from 17 participants. This is a large sample for life story research and allowed for diversity in the study.

A range of organisations were approached to get the full sample. These included NGOs working on the resettlement and mentoring of ex-offenders, the London Probation Trust and mosques. The purposeful sampling prioritised getting a good mix based on the following characteristics: Muslim offenders from different ethnic backgrounds and age groups, as well as a good mix of born Muslims and converts. A significant part of my sample (7) was drawn from a mosque in a small city in the North of England which followed the Sufi Naqshbandi tradition in Islam. This site was chosen as I knew of other researchers who had accessed research participants there. A key contact found members of the community that had a criminal conviction and were willing to participate in the research. The participants were recruited for me; it was not clear if any refused or might have been excluded for any reason by my contact person. The community in which the mosque was based was predominantly composed of first and second-generation British Pakistani migrants who had migrated to England in the early 1960s and 1970s. The sample drawn was therefore mainly of Pakistani origin and community relationships were based on strong kinship ties and a common ethnic background, as well as religion. There were however two white converts in the sample drawn from this mosque. Although this site was chosen purely for convenience, its location in the North of England and its particular adherence to Naqshbandi Islam provided a contrast to the rest of the participants who were from London. Participants were also recruited through two NGOs in London working to support the reintegration of Muslim offenders. Seven participants were receiving formal help in the form of mentoring as well as help with accessing housing and employment from these religious organisations. The final three participants were recruited through the London Probation Trust. Differences on the basis of geographical location, ethnicity and religious affiliation had an influence on the type of community help participants received and the sort of community ties they relied on. The participants drawn from London tended to go to mosques that were more ethnically diverse.

Data Collection

As part of the process of explaining the research and getting written consent, participants were made aware that participation in the research would involve more than one interview. Eleven of the participants participated in more than one interview. With the rest (6), I relied on material from one in-depth unstructured interview. Following a Biographical Interpretive Method (BIM) (Harrison, 2009), the first interview with each of the participants was unstructured and was used to build rapport with the research participants. Participants were asked to talk about their lives, thinking about it in chapters. The interview was kept unstructured so that no assumptions or preconceptions were imposed on the interviewees.

In particular, I was conscious not to overemphasise religion or identity as the primary categories of interest for the research. By doing so, I tried to do justice to an important maxim in qualitative research that is pointedly formulated by Desmond

(2014) as follows: "By assigning utmost importance to the categories that define a group, ethnographers may unintentionally bias their informants to filter the representation of everyday life through the prism of that category." (Desmond, 2014, 552).

The first interview rarely followed any kind of chronological order. Instead, participants chose different events from their lives that they considered as significant. They went back and forth as they discussed significant phases and events in their lives. The first interview was followed up with further interviews which were more structured, building upon themes and ideas that emerged in the first interview. The second interview included some questions that were considered relevant to the research questions. From the third interview onward, I also used timelines with participants (as recommended by Laub & Sampson, 2005). These were useful as participants could chronologically order the information they had given in the first interview. The timelines provided a structure to the stories of the participants. The timeline also allowed me to go back and revisit the significant themes that required further explanation or detail at different stages in their life. Going over the significant events in each participant's life in a chronological order also allowed for any inconsistencies or ambiguities to be resolved. In this chapter, I draw on the interview material which focused on post-release experiences.

Data Analysis and Coding

The first part of data organisation involved formatting and editing interview transcripts. Transcriptions were strict verbatim and included pauses identified by the use of … in any quotations as well as *erm*, *ums*, *ers*, repetition etc. The data was anonymised, and pseudonyms were used to insure confidentiality. Initial precoding of the data was done manually, in which key passages and quotes were organised in a word document. This document maintained the chronological order of the life story stages but divided these stages into major themes that seemed significant upon the first reading of the data. This was followed by a write up on each of the participants, in which themes relevant to the research questions, such as significant events, neighbourhood, motifs, emotions and relationships were noted in individual biographies. This helped bring each of the stories together so that major events and themes in each story were available in a summarised format for easy access. The interview transcripts, biographical information, field notes and relevant literature were then transferred to NVivo for formal analysis.

Drawing on Charmaz (2001) Saldana (2016, 4) regards coding as "the "critical link" between data collection and their explanation of meaning." Coding entails capturing the 'essence' or main attribute of language-based qualitative data. As stated in the previous section, the study adopted unstructured interviewing. Starting from early childhood, participants were allowed to recollect events and chapters in their lives that they considered relevant and important. Coding analysis has been broken down to reflect the different chapters in the lives of participants, as presented by them during the interviews. Most participants divided their lives according to

age. The first significant chapter is up to the age of 10 or 11, followed by teenage years, life after secondary school, early adulthood, and their current situation. The flow of these seamless narratives was broken at various points due to traumatic events, losses suffered, imprisonment, and other sudden changes in the lives of the participants. The coding aimed to retain the narrative element of the interviews while also highlighting these sudden changes and significant events.

NVivo coding was the first step through which the data were clustered or organised. Recurring meanings and patterns were developed into categories. These categories formed the basis of major research themes which were used to develop theories from the data. The research adopted social organisation categories by Lofland et al. (2006; see also Saldana 2016), which include the following:

1. Cultural practices (daily routines, occupational tasks, micro cultural activity etc.)
2. Episodes (unanticipated events or irregular activities e. g. divorce)
3. Encounters (interactions between two or more individuals)
4. Roles (student, father, etc.)
5. Social and personal relationships
6. Groups and cliques (gangs, congregations, families)
7. Organisations (schools, prisons, probation)
8. Settlements and habitats
9. Subcultures and lifestyles

These categories were used to code the data in order to examine the different experiences within these different social settings. As already outlined, in this chapter I use the parts of the interviews which focused on post-release experiences of the research participants. Coding of post-release material highlighted several significant themes; these are discussed in the next section.

Findings

Role of the Religious Community in Helping with Desistance

The religious community can play an important role in providing both tangible and intangible support for offenders to help them reintegrate into society after serving a prison sentence. Tangible support provided by a religious community can include help with housing and employment, two key concerns for offenders upon release from prison. As for the intangible support, it usually includes strong social bonds within the community based on reciprocal relationships, an issue of major significance for the reintegration of the offenders, particularly regarding the degradation and stigma associated with their imprisonment. Acceptance by spiritual and community leaders can act as a redemption ritual which allows offenders to break from their negative past and develop a new, positive identity. The community can also support the move away from crime by providing a moral community which

engenders respect for the law. Moreover, civic engagement and contributing constructively within a community can strengthen a positive new identity. This tangible, as well as intangible, support plays an important role in helping offenders manage the delicate transition back into society, which is usually fraught with challenges as well as possibilities. It is important to emphasise, however, that such support only led participants to successful desistance if the individual had made a personal commitment to move away from crime. For individuals who refused to make such a commitment, community help did not lead to desistance from crime. By continuing to remain involved in crime, they risked experiencing ruptures in their relationships with positive peers within the religious community and jeopardising their access to help and support.

Redemption Narratives, New Social Relations and a Moral Community

It is therefore not surprising that the role of the religious community as a bridge towards acceptance and a positive new identity was crucial in the lives of the participants who had moved away from crime. For Muslim ex-offenders in this study, their belonging to and participation in a religious community helped them maintain a positive identity by supporting all three elements of their redemption scripts. Within religious communities, participants sought guidance and forgiveness from spiritual leaders. These interactions with spiritual leaders acted as redemption rituals and strengthened a positive identity. Religious communities helped these participants overcome self-doubts about their decision to desist, thereby helping them to maintain a sense of control over their actions. Religious communities were also a source of social capital and participants could access help with housing and employment through their social contacts within the community. Contributing positively to their community helped these participants strengthen their new identity away from crime.

Participants emphasised the importance of their religious communities in inhibiting their involvement in crime by providing strong social bonds and support. Relationships with members in the religious community were an alternative to previously harmful peer relationships. Positive roles within a community offered an alternative way to make social bonds and gain the respect and status that individuals got through their involvement with their peer groups (Maruna, 2007). Religious communities were seen to promote moral messages that condemned acts of deviance and crime and helped offenders maintain a sense of connection to moral norms and values. Congregational religious practise also provided structure and gave a sense of routine to everyday life (Calverley, 2013).

For Abdullah (British Pakistani), changing his circle of friends and involving himself back in the mosque was crucial to his commitment to desist.

> When I came out (of prison) I had offers every other week. “Hey how you doing? Heard you’re back, sorry to hear about your father, you know when you’re ready give us a shout”.

> I just changed my number then. I just said "boom", crossed everybody out start fresh again start fresh again, started coming *dhikr* here. On Thursday we'd come here and read *dhikr*, read *jumʿa* (Friday prayer), changed my attitude, changed my ways, changed everythin' cause now I've seen it there's no point doin' it again, is there? You know what I mean. You know so I'm just thinking let's start all over again get another chance and get on with it to be honest with you. But it's just obviously you know you make mistakes we're human innit but if you make the same mistakes again, I don't know what to call that – stupid innit?

Along with peer relationships, to have a person of high spiritual standing within the religious community engage with them, despite their own stigmatised identity (due to their crimes), helped participants to manage the shame and stigma of their crime. By getting acceptance from a figure of religious authority, participants felt they could move away from the stigma of their past. This acceptance can be regarded as a redemption ritual. As Abdullah explained:

> Our Sheikh's different, it's no *sakhti* [strictness], there is no *sakhti*… I am, I am, I am scum, I am scum. People know now my true colours and what I am. You know who I am. People know who I am, you know more than that, but you still choose to sit here and talk to me. That's what my Sheikh's like. My Sheikh will say to me "Son yeah, it happens innit. Have you learnt anything off it?" "Yeah I have." "Right, *puttar* [son] go and do your thing. Go and do your thing. Now don't make the mistake again." If you make it again the Sheikh will sit there and say, "You done it again?" "I have done it again." "What you doing?" It's just, you know what it is, it's just that focus…

For born-Muslim participants, relationships within the religious community were based on kinship bonds and a common ethnic culture. Most of these participants had moved away from their kinship community during the phase in which they were involved in crime. They returned to these kinship relationships after release from prison.

Converts tended to establish links with a religious community through their experience of conversion; for some of the participants, this was during their prison sentence. For them, the bonds they formed with other Muslim prisoners during their prison sentence remained important after release from prison. Ali (white convert) had relied on his Muslim friends from prison when he was going through a "mid-life crisis":

> Last year I had a major slip. You know I'm just saying this for the sake of being truthful. I had a major slip, me and my wife broke, I went back to London. I thought I was missing something… and I had enough, and I said I wanna go out… So, I went out to bars and started wanting to live that non-Muslim lifestyle again… You see everybody is out there having fun and I allowed myself to become weak and… but you know it was difficult. So, I went back to London and being away from the situation and back around people who knew me… umm and who challenged me, you know what I mean. I needed to be around people who would just be bluntly honest with me and say listen… yeah, they were all from prison. I reached out to them. I texted about three or four of them one day and said, "Look man, I'm in a bad way, you know I'm really in a bad way, I'm close to doing things that I'm not, you know"… and mashallah they really… they said come back to London, at my house every day you know, they were good brothers, I mean. Yeah, they were really there for me. You know they kinda got me back…

Ali's relationship with other ex-prisoners who had committed to desisting from crime provided a reciprocal relationship which helped him maintain his

commitment to desistance despite his personal doubts. Having such a group to rely on in times of difficulty was significant in helping him maintain desistance from crime.

Giving Back to Society – Moving Away from Materialism

Civic engagement and giving back to the community offered participants another avenue through which they could occupy roles that could lead to identity change and help them move away from crime (Uggen et al., 2004). Many of the participants spoke of wanting to contribute to broader society in a more positive way. For some, this was related to their role in their kinship community (Dawood, Abdullah, Rahim), while for others it was a broader concern. In particular, participants saw their life stories as instructional; they felt their experiences were useful in helping others avoid the mistakes they had made. Two of the participants were working as mentors in the criminal justice system. Others also spoke about their desire to be more civically involved.

Amongst ex-offenders, the role of a 'wounded healer', a person who helps other prisoners navigate their integration back into society, is seen to lead to a range of positive outcomes (Eglash, 1958; LeBel, 2007, 2009; LeBel et al., 2015). Involvement in mentoring roles is linked to a lower sense of stigma about previous criminal history, more pro-social values, better self-esteem and better coping strategies, along with higher levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Steve (Mixed Race, convert) wanted to work as a youth mentor. He felt such work would be particularly rewarding for him due to his own difficult past:

> What I really want to do is get into that mentoring like youths that are in gangs and trying to deter them from, because obviously I've been there, I've done that. Been involved in gangs in that area and stuff like that. So that's what I want to do, and in terms of, that would be fulfilling for me. Just before I come out, I was thinking about even like charity work abroad. Not for long. Just for me, helping someone, I get, there's nothing, there's not a better feeling, you know what I'm saying? There's not a better feeling. Obviously, I have to make money, but I started to realise it before, I was always "money, money, money" But there's more to life than money, you know? Money can't bring you happiness. So, I'd rather help someone along the way, and be satisfied and content, you know?

Ex-offenders regarded their informal role within their community as playing a significant role in their desistance journey. The chance to contribute positively to their community, to be involved in activities within their religious community, and to be seen as established members of their communities were a way of "giving back" to society, which was important for respondents.

Imran (British Pakistani) had set up a call centre with some friends. He felt that his business offered him a chance to give back to the community as he was able to give employment to young boys in his city:

> Plus, we're okay, so I mean that one thing [his business] like changed completely from what we are, well from what we were. Do you know what I mean? Obviously in a positive way,

> so we're bringing something to the community. Or we're doing something and now, for example the place in (name of city) we took like 30, 40 lads from the area who had nothing basically, who were drug dealers who were everything and we took 30, 40 of them and put them straight and now they're all paying taxes, they're all getting their own wages, mothers are happy, fathers are happy that's, do you know what I mean? So, we're lucky to be where we are and we can do that. So, alhamdulillah I mean everything's worked out for us so we're alright.

Imran saw the business he had set up in which he was contributing to the community by providing jobs and paying taxes but also through the spiritual practise of organising *dhikr* services after work as an indicator that things had worked out for him despite his conviction. This sense of personal achievement as well as his emphasis on giving back to society suggested that he had successfully established a positive identity for himself.

Tangible Help with Employment and Housing

Community membership could offer participants the chance to build non-criminal relationships, as well as get help with employment and housing. Most of the participants told me that they relied on contacts made through their religious communities in finding help with employment and housing. Trust formed through social relationships within religious communities allowed participants to move beyond the stigma of a criminal record. Several participants received help in setting up business ventures through social contacts at their mosque. This kind of help was significant for ex-offenders as their criminal record limited their options for finding regular work; setting up their own business gave them the opportunity to earn money without having to deal with the stress and stigma of sharing their criminal record with potential employers.

In the case of Abdullah, for instance, kinship networks linked to his mosque played an important role in helping him become self-employed:

> I always knew people anyway, because my uncle, my *caca* (paternal uncle), few members of my family, they were in the ladies' wear. So, I always had the connections since we were kids that I know who to go to. So, if I went to him, he don't need a credit or someone to say he's a good lad, him. They'll give me the credit anyway 'cause of family links. They knew my father, there's always be that link, they'll never run off with our money, so he's one of them.

Imran, who served two prison sentences for violence, also found support to set up a business through friends in his kinship network. After leaving prison he set up a call centre with the help of a few friends from his community:

> I mean obviously for me because like, obviously I was always into fighting and all that I think that's what I think me now, I've like calmed down all that I think basically just stick to the law, simple as that, obviously we're blessed enough to get to a position where we have done now you know what I mean? Obviously, I'm not an (unclear), we were as teenagers, we were lost, proper lost. We done everything and so for us to like leave that and

> alhamdulillah, we're alright because now we've obviously got legit businesses there where it's happening for us if you know what I mean?

Along with the tangible help Imran received through friends in his community, he also attributed the success of his call centre to his Sheikh who he felt had blessed his business. Near his call centre some of the workers had set up a Thursday *dhikr* group, which they attended after work.

> It's like we built up from like seven, eight people from eight people, then from there we built up within two years we got it to like 150 – 60 people so obviously, once we implement the idea of it and we got the computers it just sprung up itself, it just – constantly just – like it's just the building I mean I can't explain it. I mean obviously we got blessings I think of Sheikh Itisham but it's just since these last six, seven months it's just been building.

Similarly, Naveed (British Pakistani) also got his first job through the help of Muslim friends outside prison. Close to the end of his sixteen-year sentence for murder, when Naveed was in an open prison, he was introduced to a property developer through one of his friends. This developer offered him a job on one of his projects. Having a job made the transition to life outside prison much easier for him. This friend became a key contact for Naveed outside prison; he started to mentor him and helped him progress through different types of jobs. Eventually he managed to get him involved in a mentoring project for young Muslim offenders.

Although religious communities could offer help with housing and employment, this help could also be jeopardised due to continued involvement in crime. Informal tangible help from community members or through formal channels such as Islamic charities required a degree of responsibility and reciprocity from individuals receiving this help. This was particularly the case with formal sources of support as NGOs faced the pressures of reporting the rates of reconviction and recidivism for the people they were helping, in order to maintain their funding. They were also under immense pressure to show that offenders under their care were moving, in quite short periods of time, onto secure employment and more long-term secure housing. These pressures faced by the organisation made it difficult for them to adopt a more long-term relationship with the offenders they were supporting. In the case of informal help, these pressures were also present, as participant's relationships could become strained if they continued to carry on their involvement in crime despite receiving help and support. However, generally, in the case of informal sources of support, there was more flexibility, more chances of forgiveness and help available for offenders to bring about change. Informal help therefore was better able to support the 'zigzag' nature of desistance.

Vin and Zulfikar, two casual Muslims who had found accommodation through community contacts, became homeless due to their continued involvement in crime. After release from prison, Zulfikar's (British Pakistani) cousin had offered him a place to stay in London. This arrangement, however, did not last long, as his cousin disliked him using drugs and alcohol.

After his release from prison, Vin (mixed race, convert) had secured accommodation through an Islamic charity. He really valued his apartment as his first secure,

independent accommodation; having access to his own place was an important step towards taking more responsibility and becoming an adult:

> Where I've got my own little flat, it's like it's the first time I've been in a situation in life, so I'm managing it. It's like I'm becoming an adult. Or I am an adult, but I know what I'm being, I'm being more responsible in terms of getting to understand how the working world works. I've never had a job before. But same way I've never gone out and doing my own shoppin', my own washin', my own laundry, my own cookin'. All of these things, I'm doing them. So I have grown. I'm adding these skills and experiences. Just trying to re-start my life, basically, away from the crime. 'cause the circle was vicious circle, and one thing leads to the next, and you know, you only get older.

Despite the hope and aspiration in Vin's interview, his situation changed quite rapidly. When I tried to contact him for a follow-up interview, he was not available. I found out through the organisation that he had been evicted from his flat. A key worker at the organisation explained that he was always behind on his rent; there were concerns that he had a gambling addiction and was using his housing benefit to maintain his addiction. Although Vin was open about his dependence on cannabis in the interview, he did not mention anything about gambling. However, since he could not consistently keep to the rules set by the organisation, he had lost his access to his apartment.

Role of Religion for Persistent Offenders

It is important to emphasise that the importance of a religious community in deterring from crime was effective for participants who had developed strong redemption narratives, in which they separated their current identity from their past criminal actions and saw themselves as inhabiting their real, authentic 'good' self (Maruna, 2001, 148). Desistance involved both an active decision and commitment from the individual in moving away from crime despite difficulties and challenges, along with an environment which promoted and supported this change in the individual (Maruna, 2014). Desistance from crime was a process which required constant work from participants, and many found it hard to completely move away from crime. Dependence on drugs was a mitigating factor, however, which could draw participants back towards crime, as were financial pressures and the pull of negative peer relationships.

The main difference between persistent offenders and ex-offenders was a sense of control over personal actions. Persistent offenders who were part of religious communities felt that their actions were driven by forces outside their control (Topalli et al., 2013). They described their rule breaking as driven by worldly temptations or strains. This focus on external forces helped them justify their involvement in crime. These participants retained the idea of returning to an identity in which they were able to overcome the strains of worldly desires and obstacles to commit fully to the religious teachings they were ignoring due to their involvement in crime.

Dawood (mixed race, convert), was a regular attendee at his mosque and had recently been arrested for involvement in the supply of drugs and possession of an imitation firearm. For Dawood, his arrest was a one-off slip; he had succumbed to the financial pressures, and he had also wanted to help his friend who was looking for a place to store some of his drugs. Describing his crime as influenced by external pressures and explaining his actions as an attempt to help a friend were ways in which he could see his crime as externally driven and not in contradiction to his religious beliefs:

> Like his mum kicks him out. She's found some *ganja* [name of a drug] or something in the house some *puriya* [packet of drugs] em and she kicked him out the house. So he says, "Can I stay at the flat?" and I'm like might as well and 'cause I was staying somewhere else at the time I was like, "Yeah no problem, no problem." Like I say, he was giving me money as well, which I was a bit skint at the time because I was like going back down d'you know the wrong ways and that, so my money weren't save, it was windowed away. Like I say I had the stress of Christmas coming up and the kids saying "I want this, I want that, I want this, I want that" so like I said I don't know why but I kinda justified it to myself in my own head "Oh well I'm not doing it myself like I'm just letting him do it in the flat and letting him stay there" and like I said I can't tell lies and say I didn't know he was doing drugs 'cause I did know he was doing drugs and selling drugs like I said I kinda justified it to myself.

Identity change is seen as a process which starts with contemplation of the possibility of change (Ebaugh, 1988). Persistent offenders showed some degree of reflection and contemplation along with phases of action. However, a complete shift in social relationships and changes to identity were not observable.

Conclusion

I started the chapter by discussing the role of religious communities in supporting desistance from crime. For ex-offenders, participation within a religious community led to changes in social relationships, along with tangible and intangible help to settle back into life outside. Religious communities provided social capital to maintain a crime-free identity. Along with socio-economic integration, civic engagement provided another avenue through which participants could occupy social roles that were linked to positive identity changes and a move away from crime. In this, the role of 'wounded healer' was particularly valuable in helping participants manage stigma and develop a new positive self-identity. Spiritual sense-making and community ties may be aspects of re-entry that are specific to participants who have an affiliation to a religion, however the support provided by the religious community was not different to the established social factors that support desistance from crime, such as: positive social bonds and relationships of reciprocity; support in finding long-term employment and housing; and opportunities for civic engagement.

The importance of self-narratives in influencing long term desistance from crime is reinforced through the life stories presented in this chapter, as participants who did not have strong redemption narratives could be part of religious communities

but continue to remain involved in crime. For persistent offenders, aspirations of moving back to a pure crime-free identity was part of their self-understanding. However, the participants saw themselves as lacking the power or motivation to deal with challenges and setbacks. They regarded external pressures, such as the need for material things, the influence of their peers and their dependence on drugs, as too powerful and saw their actions as being driven by these influences. Religious ideas of fate and weakness in the face of worldly temptations, as well as ideas of endless opportunities to gain forgiveness were commonly used techniques of justifying involvement in crime.

The chapter extends knowledge in the field of narrative identity and desistance by showing the ways in which positive religious self-understanding, as well as a supportive religious community, contribute to the process of desistance for offenders. The focus on the important role of a minority community – Muslims in England – as a space for resettlement and a protagonist of informal social work challenges usual narratives which present both such communities and the individuals who belong to them as helpless victims of racism, and socio-economic deprivation. A religious identity, which is usually seen as supportive of involvement in serious crimes, such as Islamist-inspired terrorism and hate crimes is in fact shown to play a role in helping individuals desist from involvement in crime. This points to the importance of further developing an understanding of the role of religion in desistance and involvement in crime. Not enough attention has been paid to this area in recent times.

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Secularism, Social Work and Muslim Minorities in France

Daniel Verba and Faïza Guélamine

Abstract Islam's increased visibility in France over the past 20 years has challenged social workers, confronted with new practices that often provoke consternation and cause professional difficulties. Social workers' relationships with members of society who are motivated by faith, and also with their colleagues, some of whom openly express their Muslim identity, force them to adapt to new religious frames of reference. Social workers are also occasionally compelled to revisit the Christian roots of social work that many of them felt had been left behind by the profession. These patterns also explain the prevalence of reminders about the secular basis of social work, in a sector where radicalisation among the young tends to be perceived as a regressive influence on freedom of expression and, above all, on women's rights.

Keywords Islam · Social work · Religion · Secularism · Radicalisation

The Christian Roots of Social Work

Islam's increased visibility in France over the past twenty years has challenged social workers to confront new practices that often provoke consternation and cause professional difficulties. The awakening of religious identities, within a highly secularised context, has been troubling for social workers, particularly as it has thrown

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into relief the origins of their discipline, which is at least partly rooted in Christian religious traditions (Verdès-Leroux, 1978). For a long time, social workers and especially social service assistants were recruited from practicing Catholic families.

To construct legitimacy for their interventions, in opposition to the charitable and religious provisions of the founding mothers and fathers, social workers laid claim to the legal and political principles of the secular Republic, with its values and the separation of spiritual and temporal powers becoming widely accepted. As a result, religious practice was often confined to a strictly private domain. The re-emergence of religious questions in social work has therefore triggered bitter debates within socio-educational institutions. Torn between an attachment to the values of the Republic and a need to take into account client specificities in order to better support them, social workers are now called upon to find a compromise between ensuring respect for a certain religious neutrality, at the risk of cutting themselves off from clients who see their beliefs as an essential part of their identity, and taking such specificities into account, at the risk of falling into the trap of culturalism, in which people are determined by and defined within their own cultural system. Whether the question of religion is used as a pretext for rejection, seen as a mixed bag of beliefs, including racism, or for new ways of proselytising (the impact of which is still to be measured), the very meaning of social work, both in its historical foundations and in its daily practices, is called into question. This can be seen in some lower-class neighbourhoods, where religious associations may compete with social institutions, such as community or prevention centres. This uneven playing field means that social work is faced with the challenge of finding new intervention methods based on individual and collective resources of population fractions which have been led to communitarianism around the values of Islam, after having tried in vain to have their citizenship recognised and to benefit from its related rights. This "recourse to Islam" (Hamdi-Chérif, 2014; Verba, 2016) can thus be seen as a failure of traditional social work, which has not been able to adapt to a context of racialisation[1] of social relations, as highlighted in the work of Didier Fassin and Éric Fassin (2006) and Didier Fassin (2010).

Emergence of an "ostensibly halal way of life": The Pride of Muslim Youth

The visible Muslim presence in France is quite recent, even if the first waves of immigration occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. During the 1950s, these populations were the subject of targeted social treatment both in metropolitan France and in French departments, in a context where issues of Muslim social control were caught up in the interests of colonial administration and the needs of

[1] By racialisation we mean the social process by which social proponents tend to be assigned or to assign themselves a single identity of race, class, gender or religion.

the French economy (Mahjoub-Guélamine, 1997). However, it was not really until the 1980s that new forms of social visibility appeared, with the emergence of what Rachid Benzine a scholar of Islam called "an ostensibly halal way of life" (Pascual, 2015), expressed through the wearing of the veil, the development of Islamic finance, a more perceptible practice of Ramadan, or more numerous halal butcher shops; in short, as a vocational social animation student told us, there was an emergence of "Islamic pride, as there was with gay pride at other times." (Interview with the researcher).

In the summers of 1981 and 1982, the suburbs of Lyon with high immigrant populations saw significant social unrest, demonstrations and rioting. Subsequently, "young people from suburban areas of post-colonial immigration," emerged on the public and media scene, demanding equal treatment and an end to the stigmatisation and discrimination to which they were subjected. This jolted French society into an unexpected awareness: these social movements showed the entrenched presence of populations that had moved from the status of "passive" to that of "active" minorities (Göle, 2015). All these movements eventually merged into imaginary and media constructions which established the Muslim, and especially the young Muslim individual, as an "enemy from within." A few years later, these constructions would be reinforced by the figure of the terrorist, justifying his or her mass crimes in the name of Islam (Liogier, 2012).

If Islam has disrupted the general concept of the relationship between Republican and religious institutions, it is not only because it has moved from its initial discretion to being more socially visible, but also because it sometimes claims that its beliefs and social practices are more strongly interwoven. This calls into question the French secular pact, which resulted from a hard-won struggle against the Catholic Church. "It is the presence of Islam in France," Jean Boussinesq contends, "that reveals, or causes to resurface, the reference to secularism, resulting mostly in a negative conclusion, about which we can ask: on what knowledge of Islam it is based, and on what knowledge of secularism?" (Boussinesq, 2003).

La laïcité: Secularism as a Hostile Recourse against Islam

Breaking with a secularism that is more anticlerical than mindful of religious expression, even the most qualified social workers are tempted to brandish the law on the Separation of the Church and the state as a weapon, or as protection, against religions – particularly Islam – despite most of them not being overly familiar with it, and make only a performative or "narrative" use of it, as Jean Baubérot described (Baubérot, 2012). At a conference at the University of Paris 13 (Bobigny), of the 122 school social workers present in the amphitheatre, only one had read the text of the law. This misguided use of secularism, also embraced by certain early feminist

movements,[2] seeks a neutralisation of public space and professional life, even though its regulations are much more liberal, almost exclusively limited in scope to the state and its officials, of whom religious neutrality is indeed required. On the other hand, users of public services are in no way subject to this obligation, even though some social workers, territorial civil servants or association employees would prescribe it for the persons they deal with, thereby extending religious neutrality well beyond legal obligations (Guélamine, 2016).

Faced with religious arguments, social workers may be all the more troubled if they are unfamiliar with monotheistic belief-systems. They may be dissuaded from seeking to decipher them as they may do in other situations where vulnerable people mobilise arguments to convince a social worker their demands are valid. The use of religion asserts a kind of argumentative meta-legitimacy, that is, a form of sacred recognition which can destabilise social professionals, if they lack familiarity with the social functions of religious belief. In academic circles, magico-religious beliefs have largely been exorcised from social science-derived professions, as they broke with the vocational dimension of their origins. At a conference organised on May 4, 2016 by the *NPO Enquête* on the teaching of religious facts in primary school, several speakers spoke of a 'religious illiteracy of teachers' which could also concern social workers, whether they are believers or not. For example, during an intervention with social workers from a departmental council, an educator from a children's boarding house told us that when a young girl came to her and unexpectedly asked to respect Ramadan or to wear the veil, she admitted to reacting in a derogatory way that questioned the sincerity of the approach.[3] However, such sudden surges of religiosity also reveal a social and identarian unease characteristic of adolescents, who are undergoing psychological restructuring and seeking to confront the adult world. This is even more the case for Muslim adolescents, who are aware that, in the hypersensitive environment surrounding them since the terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2016, religious references, particularly to Islam, can generate a certain panic among socio-educational teams.

Social Workers and the Islam of Assisted Persons

The following accounts are mainly drawn from two surveys carried out with 559 early childhood educators and 219 school social workers between 2012 and 2016. A survey carried out at the Académie de Créteil among school social workers during three departmental team meetings made it possible to examine the question of religious facts and secularism in the school sector, which is particularly affected by these subjects. Respondents answered 11 closed questions about their exposure to religious facts, the possible radicalisation of the high school students they were

[2] Elisabeth Badinter is one of its most emblematic figures.

[3] Familiarly translated, this was: "Stop your bullshit!"

accompanying and their conception of secularism. At the end of the questionnaire, they were able to add comments, and some sent observations to the researcher in the form of anecdotes or written accounts, a number of which have been reproduced in this chapter. Finally, interviews were conducted with two technical advisors from the National Education.

The surveys were also supplemented by accounts collected during training sessions and university courses in religious anthropology for future social service workers, sociocultural workers and specialised educators (2014–2018). While the studies presented here mainly concern France, and while it is always appropriate to return to the historical context to understand the present, we believe that what is described in this chapter can be applied in part to most European countries experiencing the same type of evolution. Whether it is the process of secularisation, growing religious diversity, the emergence of a European Islam, migration or the ecological crisis, many Western societies are experiencing the same major challenges that affect citizens.

Professionals in the social and socio-educational sectors who indicate they have encountered religious beliefs during their work with vulnerable persons, oscillate between a visceral rejection of any religious intrusion and making reasonable accommodations, between calls to secular order and shows of tolerance for arbitrary contours. A very large number of anecdotes collected on serious issues in social work concern Islam, but it should also be noted that other currents of religious thought, such as Evangelism, may also be identified by social workers. A survey we conducted in 2016 among 122 school social workers in Seine-Saint-Denis showed that 56% of the problem situations concerned Islam, 25% evangelism, 9% Catholicism, 5% Judaism, 1% Buddhism and 4% other religions or sects (Sikhs, Jehovah's witnesses). If we want to understand the new forms of religious expression, we must also observe their interactions. Religious identities, Olivier Bobineau argues, mirror each other, and vary according to "power relations, strategies and protagonists" (Bobineau, 2015). Indeed, confessional affiliations do not only express a certain disposition to spirituality but are also an indicator of social relationships. For example, when young people from MECS claim to belong to Islam, we have seen that they more often affirm a desire for social requalification than a mystical or spiritual disposition. This is so to the extent that 'common', 'fragile' or 'discriminated against' may, in some institutions, be systematically associated with 'Muslims' and relayed by the protagonists themselves. At Las Cases high school in Montpellier, 96.5% of the children are of Moroccan origin and when asked about their identity, they do not declare that they are French or possibly Moroccan, but 'Muslim' (Libération, October 18, 2015).

Educators and social workers note that they are sometimes prevented from carrying out their mission because the intended beneficiaries object to them on religious grounds. For instance, they may challenge a training course, demand halal food, ask for spaces for praying, or refuse to shake hands with a person of the opposite sex. Many of them have difficulty understanding that what they often consider as futile, superstitious, an outdated practice or even discriminatory against women,

can stand in the way of a measure designed to provide social or educational assistance to beneficiaries of policies:

> What can I do? I'm here to help people integrate professionally, but when it comes to this woman who doesn't want to consider a job where she has to remove her veil, I don't see what I can do. (Manager in a job-seeking assistance service)

Yet despite these obstacles, we have also found that social workers are adaptable and most often seek to safeguard a trusting relationship between beneficiaries and social institutions by practicing a form of reasonable compromise, based on the Canadian accommodations model. In Canada, this is a legal provision designed to make a labour law rule more flexible in order to avoid the possible discrimination it could create by being too prescriptive. Such adjustments can already be observed in nurseries where early childhood educators work (Verba, 2014). They do not wait for ministerial prescriptions to take into account certain cultural practices if they do not affect the safety of young children, nor call into question the principle of religious neutrality required from officials in municipal or departmental structures:

> What comes first to me is the physical, moral and emotional well-being of the child and his or her family, with respect and without judgment. If an educational practice seems questionable to me, I discuss it with the parents and we reach a mutual understanding and compromise, in the interest of the child, on both sides. (Childhood Educator)

> The wearing of the veil [of mothers] generally does not pose any problem in early childhood care because it is the reception of children, their harmonious development, and therefore the taking into account of their families, whatever they may be, that is at the heart of the care project. (Educator)

Finally, some social workers have been able to achieve the necessary distance from religious reference points by carefully deciphering the power relationships that are established between professionals and the people they support:

> I remember a "Chechen leader" who led all the residents to boycott the party we had organised for them on the pretext that the meat was not halal, contrary to what we had told them. And then, finally, I understood that what he was really telling me, as the head of department, was that *he* was the leader! (Head of Service, Asylum Seeker Centre)

The director of a MECS (*Maison d'enfants à caractère social*, Children's home of a social nature) in Toulouse also experienced the strategic use of religious references by a group of young Muslim girls at his school, to gain some substantial benefits related to Ramadan, such as being allowed to stay up later than others in order to eat, or being able to get up later in the morning, in short, benefits which would enable them to distinguish themselves from other young girls and highlight their particularities. Having to deal with the hostile reactions of the non-Muslims in the home and the disruption of his establishment, the director backtracked and revisited not only the girls' schedule but also the house rules. At the end of these revamping efforts, only one resident continued fasting. The others had simply sought to reverse the balance of power with the educational team and had used religious rituals as an effective pressure lever to regain some power within the MECS and "become a dominant and abusive group". Many anecdotes show how Islam is often

used by young people both to rebuild disallowed identities and gain advantages, but also sometimes, simply to oppose adult educators and reverse power relations:

> We had a kid who converted from a traditional Catholic family (...) and it's clear, her conversion to Islam was clearly to oppose her family (...) when she came to our service with all these [sic] Qur'an that she very visibly displayed, it was almost funny, it was such a caricature (...) her mother was completely lost, her daughter was walking around the city in her black veil. Not easy, by the way, for the family assistant who looked after her (...). (Educator)

To address the complexity of religion in contemporary France, it is therefore necessary to understand the context, that is, the social positions in which religious protagonists, both collective and institutional, take on meaning in relation to each other. In this sense, Muslim practices in France cannot be disconnected from the Catholic and secular context in which they developed, being an echo of, or reaction to, the influence of French secularism. If we do not take this context into account, we cannot understand why young Iranian or Saudi women seek to escape religious constraints such as the wearing of the veil, when, at the same time, it is the subject of a demand for freedom of expression in France (Guélamine, 2016; Zérouala, 2015).[4]

Believers and Non-Believers

In addition to the tensions between social workers and service users concerning religious practices, particularly if these practices hinder social support to vulnerable people, tensions also emerge during interactions among professionals themselves, reproducing fractures within French society. In some cases, such conflicts can be exacerbated by differences in regulations between public structures, bound by the religious neutrality of their social workers, and private associations, which benefit from more flexible regulations. Additionally, some social professions, particularly those that require fewer qualifications, such as nursery assistants, animators or social auxiliaries, have become highly ethnicised. Under the influence of mechanisms which are fragmenting social professions, as well as other segments of the working world, women – particularly those from working-class backgrounds – are taking up many of these care professions, which receive little recognition. Indeed, the professional practice of these women has become religiously connoted – even if there is no proselytising action involved – provoking hostile reactions from management, colleagues, but also sometimes from service users themselves:

> During a camp with teenagers, a young animator, Asma, of Maghrebian origin and Muslim faith, led a room full of young girls. I heard three young people discussing the fact that Asma got up every morning at dawn to pray. The three young people said they were ashamed not to do the same. I explained to them that everyone has the right to live their [sic] belief and faith as they see it. One of the young people told me that she was still ashamed and that she would not go to heaven (...). On the third day, two of these young girls got up early for the first prayer. (Prevention Educator)

[4] Precisely against the defenders of anticlerical freedom of expression.

In exchanges that touch on religious issues, social workers may themselves be caught in the trap of their own affiliations, by ruling on what constitutes 'good' or 'bad' religious practice, or by intervening as 'experts' either on secularism or Islam.

> One afternoon at the youth centre of the neighbourhood house, the facilitator was set up with a group of young girls. They were talking about Ramadan [it was underway], how to observe it and respect its 'rules'. The majority of these four or five girls were Muslim; the facilitator did not hide that she was practising. They talked about a young girl who was not there, and whom they all obviously knew. The host criticised this young woman's way of practicing Ramadan. In an attempt to be educational and moral, she affirmed that this young girl, who one day practiced, the next day not, one day hid it [her religion], the next day not, was not clear about her choices, and in a way disserved the religion she wanted to promote. (Prevention Educator)

Among Muslim social workers, there are also significant differences in practices between those who consider themselves "first Muslims, then educators" (Educator, Protection Judiciaire Jeunesse), those who claim that "you have to be Muslim to work in the neighbourhoods" (Prevention Educator), and those who, on the defensive, tend to apply secularism well beyond legal obligations to ensure that they are not exposed to proselytising allegations.

> We had educators who did not shake hands with women, but this is intolerable, we took it up again in terms of labour standards, the necessary collaboration, politeness, gender equality. (NGO Executive)

This creates latent conflicts between qualified social workers, often from the 'white' and secularised middle classes, and unqualified educators or animators who tend to use a religious reference framework in their professional practices, most of the time related to Islam. This is also reflected in Nathalie Kakpo's doctoral thesis citing the director of a social centre who was confronted with an animator drawing pedagogical arguments from Muslim theology:

> It is not possible to say to a child, "don't hurt a tree because you hurt Allah". We can tell a young person that a tree is a living organism. You shouldn't hit it or stab it. There is the scientific side and there is the religious side. You can't mix the two, especially within a youth and community centre because that's not why you're here. (Kakpo, 2007, 156)

In addition to these references to religion, religious affiliations may cause a kind of competition within teams, through seeking to obtain secondary benefits or exercising symbolic power by putting pressure on the management team. For example, some Muslim social workers may be tempted, as a visible minority, to request days off for Muslim holidays, scheduling arrangements during Ramadan or special diets that may 'annoy' non-Muslim colleagues, who see them as opportunistic and illegitimate claims, perhaps even as proselytising. The imposition of halal food in certain structures or during summer camps, without information on actual religious affiliations, is also a recurrent subject of debate within institutions that host young people, including an over-representation of North Africans or sub-Saharan Africans who are immediately assigned a 'Muslim origin':

> It is not the absence of colleagues during religious holidays that bothers me, but the inequality compared to other professionals of different religions. (School Social Worker)

> I knew that the employee representative had spoken to management about me and raised the issue of my attitude. I don't eat meat because I eat halal, but I didn't say anything, I didn't ask for anything (...). When I heard about this, it outraged me, I didn't have the opportunity to talk about it again, I didn't understand (...). It is good to know that in no way is my attitude contrary to secularism. I never said anything about that, I don't understand why she said that it would raise questions about respect for secularism! (Educator)

> On weekends, the boys were allowed to choose what they wanted to eat for dinner. Some of the boys were Muslim. In order not to make different meals, the educators got halal meat for everyone at each meal. Those who were not Muslim have always asked for non-halal meat, but it was never accepted to avoid making a difference. (Trainee Educator)

> During an adapted holiday where I was the facilitator, I was challenged by a situation: the facilitator in charge of the group of adolescents was Muslim, and did not hide it [he even displayed it rather proudly and spoke about it very often when we were in a team, and I know that he sometimes discussed the subject with the young people, although I do not know in what way or how often]. The young people admired him very much and he was a role model for them. As the stay progressed, an increasing number of members of his group asserted their Muslim identity and asked not to eat pork at mealtimes. (Trainee Educator)

Far from being an orthopraxis claimed by young Muslims, religious rituals such as halal prescriptions and especially the wearing of the veil, are subject to a wide variety of interpretations and uses, which makes them all the more difficult for social workers to understand.

Misunderstandings about the Islamic Veil: Resisting Aversion

Among the new forms of religious expression, the Islamic veil is probably the one that has caused the greatest consternation among social workers. (Often) perceived in the West as a sign of Muslim women's submission to a dominant phallocratic order, in France the Islamic veil is experienced by many social work professionals as an intolerable regression that evokes a bygone era, sometimes even their own personal history. During a training session, a 50-year-old educator collapsed in tears as she talked about these practices, which sent her back to a situation for women she had thought was over:

> With the veil, I find it difficult (...) it reminds me too much of nuns, I don't understand (...). (Social Service Assistant)

It should be noted that social work is overwhelmingly carried out by women who espoused the emancipatory values of post-1968 feminist movements, at least among those of the older generations. These generations often demonstrate a very critical discourse towards the wearing of the veil, which they see as the 'return' of male power and the expression of Muslim women's subordination to a repressive order. Many of the testimonies or reactions we have gathered show this aversion, for some social workers, regarding this piece of clothing which conceals women's bodies in the name of a moral order whose terms are defined by men:

> Imagine this: I demonstrated, [I] marched for women's rights, so that women could be freed from the shackles that bound them (...) and [now] I find myself facing women – young or not so young – who hide themselves or are hidden away (...) and, on top of that, lots of my colleagues don't understand how I feel, it's unbelievable! (Head of Specialised Prevention Service)

Such a position, showing a general hostility to religious expression in the public sphere, exacerbates political and scientific controversies. There are culturalist theories, which attribute macho predispositions to Arab-Muslim cultures, and then the sociologists, who point out the power relations which weigh on visible minorities, indicating that in certain contexts, they could lead to acts of "social revenge", such as during the New Year's Eve demonstration in Cologne in 2015 (Amara et al., 2016; Daoud, 2016).[5]

This debate, which in France sees certain schools of thought that denounce the wearing of the veil and others who see it as a form of emancipation or even revolt against the dominant Western order, doubles further in intensity among those who support the neutralisation of public spaces and those who point out that the French principles of secularism are far more favourable than hostile to an expression of religious affiliation:

> A lack of knowledge on the subject adds to the confusion, particularly with regard to the place of women in Islam. We hear all sorts of things about it, but in this I find we must be uncompromising, we cannot accept it: we must be able to receive people on an equal footing and promote equality between men and women. Whatever is said about wearing the veil, the woman is hidden, and doesn't have the same right to be seen as a man. I don't understand the claims of the women who want to wear it, well (...) I tell myself that it's a way of defining yourself (...). And sometimes as a sign of recognition or social pressure. (...) There's a lot to discuss about that. (Family Social Economy Advisor)

> [With] young girls wearing veils in high school, it's hard to believe that it's a personal choice. Fortunately, in my school they are obliged to remove it before entering the school. (School Social Assistant)

> The first time I received a veiled woman I found it really difficult. Now, it's only when women don't want to reveal their faces. That's not the case when you know them, but that's where I find it difficult. I can't do interviews with hidden faces. Well, really it's rare, but in fact it should be said, now that veiled women are commonplace, it's become pretty usual and it doesn't shock us as much as it did before. (Social Work Assistant)

Social workers can also break free from certain stereotypes about wearing the veil by observing daily life or while carrying out their duties that this piece of clothing does not systematically correlate with gendered submission. The interviews we conducted with young veiled girls show that far from the social representations enforced by populist media or certain feminist movements such as FEMEN, there are many motivations to 'take the veil': as a religious sign, of course, but also as

[5] This controversy took shape, in the columns of *Le Monde* newspaper, with a debate between the Algerian writer Kamel Daoud and a group of French academics who accused the writer of Islamophobia.

a form of identity renewal, an emancipation from family and school, as a sign of generational belonging, for the sake of fashion, if on the matrimonial market and, of course, for social control, the significance of which should not be underestimated, as it is difficult to perceive for those who do not share these women's daily lives:

> In fact, women who are born of migration or who we imagine to be immigrants are quickly assumed to be submissive women. Yes, there may be some that are, but that is not the only case, and we would do better to also see how other women, who are not immigrants, are discriminated against. (Social Worker)

Religious Practices: From Clothing to Food

Beyond the individual reactions just described through a few significant and recurrent anecdotes, it can be observed that many institutions, whether public or private, struggle to take a clear stand and set guidelines for their teams. Teams are often left to cobble responses together on their own, which may or may not be well-adapted either to the law or various contexts:

> Secularism is not defined well enough and is incomprehensible to many people. I work on the basis that it is the principal's job, i. e. the representative of the state in the school, to define whether clothing corresponds or not to the values of the school [veil, yarmulke, clothes that are too short]. (School Social Assistant)

We have noted a diverse range of management practices regarding religion in socio-educational institutions, which are more often related to the convictions of social workers and the institutional context than to regulations. Drawing on the most emblematic situations of religious expression in social institutions, such as the veil or halal food, researchers could establish a typology of management practices that ranges from the most rigid to the most flexible. As an example, a head of department working in a MECS demonstrated in her master's thesis that three successive directors within the same institution had managed religious practices in three different ways (Cros, 2017). The educator first noted that before 2011, the food question had not arisen and that the institution had responded on a case-by-case basis when a resident requested halal food:

> When children had specific requests for meals, alternative menus were offered [e. g. fish instead of pork]. Halal meat consumption was only exceptional and rare, during meals prepared with the educators. We have not seen any requests for vegetarian or kosher dishes.

When a new director arrived in 2012, she proposed that halal meat be made available for children who wished to eat it. Herself a practicing Muslim, she considered this proposal was in conformity with the rules of secularism within medical and educational institutions in the volunteer sector. However, in October 2015, a new director reasserted the principle of secularism and suspended the provision of halal meat in his establishment. In this way, over 4 years, the educational team witnessed three ways of dealing with religious practices and, more specifically, Islam, without

there being a collective reflection on allowing legislation, context and the wishes of the residents to be correlated at any point.

Most associations assert respect for secularism and Republican values in their statutes, but without mentioning the legal framework for its application. However, it seems that there is often a soft focus which allows room for many possible interpretations, from the most intransigent to the most flexible. This is especially so since, in matters of secularism and the values of the Republic, there is a tendency to mix matters of law and matters of conviction. Sometimes the directorates keep the problem at bay by considering that "we already have enough to deal with in educational terms without having to talk about religion" (MECS director), thus excluding any reference to religious practices; sometimes each resident receives specific care, at the risk of disrupting how the institution functions and creating differences between service users, as shown above. Many social work professionals believe that associations should be subject to the same obligations as public institutions and that religious neutrality must apply as much to employees as to residents or service users. Others argue, on the contrary, that boarding schools are similar to the private sphere for young people for the time they are resident, and that they can therefore claim access to specific food, a place of prayer or even Ramadan fasting. Unfortunately, these debates have not been sufficiently addressed by the departments or boards of directors, although it is their responsibility to ensure legislation is upheld and, if necessary, to make adjustments through negotiated or non-negotiated internal regulations with all persons concerned.

Radicalisation: Disorder among Professionals

While experts do not always agree on attributing religious significance to radical abuses linked to Islam, the fact remains that they are perpetuated by radicals in its name, or more precisely, in the name of a supposed 'true Islam'. It is also in the name of Islam and by virtue of a different 'truth' that others strongly condemn them. From a sociological point of view, this type of positioning tends to essentialise and reify 'Islam'. Professionals in direct contact with subjects potentially concerned by radical abuse are called to reflect on and engage with new paradigms, hitherto little mobilised in social work: 'radicalisation', 'sectarian abuse', 'actions to prevent radicalisation', 'undertaking deradicalisation'. A vocabulary not often heard until recently, it has taken on an increasingly important place in the field of social work, where professionals are called upon to identify and denounce people who are likely to become radicalised. They are unlikely to master the complexity of the root causes of radicalisation, and are being asked to act in contradiction with the ethical principle of professional discretion (Soutra, 2015), which guarantees a relationship of trust between social workers and accompanied persons:

> In the institutions where I work, I am solicited regarding young girls who are required to remove their veils at the entrance to the institution [but are permitted to keep loose black dresses on over their clothes or wear wide black headbands while inside the institution].

> Being called upon in this way puts me in a situation that I find delicate. The 'pretext' used to address them to me is that these young girls are sad and withdrawn and that removing their veils just in front of the school can lead to delays. But I feel that I am [really] expected to 'assess' their level of radicalisation, or even to find a way to change their behaviours. I feel, though, that my intervention would make more sense if it came after they and their parents were reminded of the rules, and that my role is supposed to be in child protection and the assessment of possible danger. However, most of the time, families have not been contacted or questioned on this subject, and interviews with the girls do not provide me with any information of real concern. When I give this feedback to the institutions, I sometimes feel that they are annoyed. I also feel quite poorly equipped to assess these situations, that I lack tools for and knowledge on this subject. (School social assistant)

Following the January and November 2015 terrorist attacks, these events were the subject of numerous exchanges between professionals and service users, particularly young people:

> It was just after the attacks on the weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. We had a discussion with some young people in the home, including K., who is Muslim. We asked them what they thought about it, if they felt concerned, K. then said "It serves them right, you shouldn't caricature the prophet, you just don't do that!" The young people around him stood up and one of them said: "Do you think it's right to die for a drawing? When you don't agree with someone, do you kill them?" K. laughed and answered: "No, but you don't touch the prophet, that's all", and he left. (Trainee Educator)

> It wasn't easy to take up this subject with young people, we didn't want to, but we had no real instructions from our management. Young people were very shocked, they didn't understand. You know that with everything people read on websites (...) with some of them, we had to talk it through, we heard a bit of everything and a lot of rubbish, that it was not true, that it was a conspiracy (...). I know a teenager who wanted to go to the demonstration and gave up because she heard it was dangerous; another one [who wore the veil] turned around because she was uncomfortable, she said she was being looked at strangely. (Educator)

> After the attacks of November 2015, young people were scared, really very scared, they were terrified, one of them told me: "it's going to be a Holocaust of Muslims." (Educator)

> For the children who refused to observe a minute of silence, instead of suspecting them of the worst, we should put more effort into getting them to talk, we must exchange with them, for them and for us, precisely so that we can work with them and not leave the Internet as their only form of communication. When we hear what they read, it's worrying, we must step into that space at all costs. (Prevention Educator)

When statements seem provocative or when adolescents in particular refer to the 'conspiracy theories' put forward on websites and social networks (Bouzar et al., 2014), professionals become concerned and consider it urgent to take these divergences into account in a renewed, adapted educational effort:

> A young man once said to me, "What do you care if I go to Syria?", I answered "Well, go ahead," reported one social animator. "But I can't say that: I'd be too afraid that some of them would pack their bags and go," another replied.

Sometimes disconcerted yet mobilised to act, social work professionals are now asking to be informed and to better understand what is commonly referred to as the

'radicalisation process'. Some people are hesitant about qualifying such behaviours. For some, radicalisation is similar to forms of sectarian conduct:

> It's the opposite to religion, it's a little bit of everything and nothing in the name of religion: above all, we are dealing with sects of sorts, with people being influenced, with young people being influenced to believe just about anything. (Social Worker)

On these 'difficult' subjects, social workers question the links between Islam and its divergences more broadly:

> Religious beliefs are becoming more important in society, it's becoming quite a worry, they wear us out with their halal, their: "I swear on the Qur'an", because what's really behind the words? Apart from religion, how do they see themselves? It wasn't the same when I started out as an educator, and then we act surprised that it turns out adults like the Kouachi brothers, the Merah[6] (...) and so on, but you can't think that it's only with Islam, all religions are concerned, it's very worrying. (Prevention Educator)

> I am struck by the demand for religion among our young people, it starts young, very young, as if they needed to cling to that (...) and whether we like it or not, it creates a fertile ground for all sorts of recruitment, especially among the most vulnerable. (Head of Department, Home for Children)

For other professionals, referring to the processes of radicalisation and extremism means separating them from religious facts:

> You have to be careful not to mix everything up. Extremes exist, but it's not the norm, be careful not to see in each religious person, someone who is a fundamentalist (...) why do we never talk about religion in a positive way? It's also a resource. (Social Worker)

> For our young people [unaccompanied foreign minors], religion is all they have left, and they fled their country at war precisely for religious reasons, some were persecuted by jihadists. (Head of Department)

Social workers therefore seem to oscillate between two positions on radicalisation. Some question the purely religious dimension of violence and may attribute it to other causes such as social and economic vulnerability. Others are more hesitant and may develop a discourse which is hostile to religions in general and Islam in particular.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to analyse the relationship between social workers and Islam. In a context made sensitive by attacks in France and around the world, social work professionals seem to be in a difficult position: they testify to paradoxical positions, sometimes hostile to religion, in the name of a secularism which frowns on religious expression, sometimes showing understanding and ready to

[6] The Kouachi brothers were the perpetrators of the murders of the Charlie-Hebdo journalists. The Merah murdered 3 soldiers and 4 Jews, including 3 children.

make adjustments for the people they accompany. This is less so when they deal with the religious beliefs of their own colleagues, as if religious beliefs were a departure from the very values of social work. There are therefore tensions in the field that traverse both social belonging and professional status, as shown in the distribution of gender and class across the different professions of social work. If Islam is indeed a subject of social concern – which social workers bear witness to:

> It is like any of the major religions present in societies "out of religion", a toolbox, a stock of symbolic references in which, in the absence of any code of meaning imposed on them and on society as a whole, individuals draw elements useful in the construction of the small believing narrative, within which the experiences and social relations they live are likely to find their meaning. (Hervieu-Léger, 2000)

It therefore becomes a matter of reintegrating religion into society by not dissociating the relationship of religion to family and social histories and, more broadly, from any trajectories, whether academic, professional, residential or matrimonial, of people accompanied by social workers.

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Identity, Intersectionality and Children in Care: The Case of Muslim-Heritage 'Looked-After' Children in the UK

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Abstract Social work policy in the UK, and public discourse informed by this policy, insists that children need permanent and secure homes. In finding homes for children, preserving and nourishing their identities is prioritised. Faith can be a key aspect of children's identities, yet there is limited research on faith considerations in the decisions and processes of finding permanent homes for vulnerable children. Focusing on the experiences of Muslim children in the care system, this chapter will begin a discussion about filling this gap in academic literature. There are approximately 4500 children of Muslim heritage in the care system in England and Wales, and this number is increasing. Through interviews with 41 social workers, foster carers, adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents, and care leavers, this study presents a research-informed narrative of the layered and intersectional ways in which Muslim-heritage children experience and articulate their faith identities. The research findings presented in this chapter indicate that to ensure children's well-being, social work practitioners and carers need to consider children's identities in their entirety, including the dynamics influencing decision-making about their lives.

Keywords Muslim identity · Muslim-heritage children · Intersectionality · Social work · Adoption and fostering

Muslim-Heritage Children in Care

The most recent government statistics in the UK state that in the year ending the 31st March 2019, there were 78,150 children in care – continuing the increases seen in recent years (Department of Education, 2019). Our recent research suggests that

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there are at least 4,500 children of Muslim-heritage in care in Britain (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2018). As discussed later, this number is at best an approximation, yet this figure provides a valuable starting point for the discussion in this chapter around faith identity, as well as larger discussions around specific provisions that need to be made with regard to these children.

We prefer the terms 'children of Muslim heritage' and 'Muslim-heritage children' over the term Muslim children. This framing allows a theoretical space within which 'Muslim identity' and 'Muslim-ness' can be understood in relation to children's experiences. Our research shows that children construct their sense of identity from their biological parents, from social work professionals' perceptions of Islam and Muslims and from adoptive parents or foster carers. By using 'Muslim-heritage children' over 'Muslim children', we at least attempt to resist falling into the trap of imposing our perceptions of Islam and 'Muslim-ness' on a child. Instead, we hope to create spaces where children can assert who they are.

Children of Muslim heritage come into care because their biological families have been unable to care for them. Reflecting trends in the wider looked-after children population in Britain, the vast majority have been taken into care due to various forms of breakdown within their biological families. The reasons that Muslim-heritage children come into care are the same as those of any other children: domestic violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, parental or family dysfunction, absent parenting, and severe illness. In the UK, 18%, or only a minority of children, are given up voluntarily with consent from biological parents or are in situations where no parental responsibility exists. Therefore, most children of Muslim heritage are taken into care by the state under a care order, without the consent of their biological family.

Others will enter the UK as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Recent statistics released by the UK government report that in the year ending 31st March 2019 there were 5,070 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, representing around 6% of all children looked after in England. Given current global politics, characterised by significant sociopolitical unrest in 'Muslim contexts', a significant number of these UASCs are of Muslim heritage. Like any other child in care, Muslim-heritage children will have diverse pathways to permanency (which means that they are placed long-term in either a family or institutional context). Some children may return to their biological families permanently or at least for a period of time. For a minority (less than 10%), adoption will mean that the children are permanently placed in new families. Other pathways to permanency include kinship care and special guardianship. However, for many Muslim-heritage children, they will be in foster care for varying periods.

In the UK, the overarching principle of child protection policy and procedures for adoption and foster placements is for the state to provide "stable, safe and secure homes which meet the whole needs of the child" (Newbigging & Thomas, 2011, 376). As this team has written elsewhere, in taking children into care, the state is using one of its most coercive powers to secure the welfare and well-being of the child (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2018). In social work practice, this includes providing children with foster carers, adopters or carers who can facilitate their

diverse religious and ethnic identities (Selwyn & Wijedesa, 2011). Whereas the Children's Act 2014 removed from legal frameworks the need for ethnic matching between parents and children in adoption placements, our research shows that social workers continue to look for perfect or near-perfect ethnic and religious matches (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2018). Furthermore, our research shows that children of Muslim-heritage thrive in home environs that understand and make space for children's religious needs (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2018, 2021) .

It is important to state that our research does not claim that Muslim-heritage children must necessarily be placed in Muslim homes. Instead, social workers should aim to achieve a child-led nuanced understanding of the diverse and complex ways in which children can identify with their religious heritage. In this paper, informed by our original research findings, feminist theorisations around intersectionality and geographical/disciplinary emphasis within British Muslim Studies, we will aim to achieve a multi-faceted understanding of the identity of Muslim-heritage children in care. We will interrogate how children's diverse and intersectional identities shape their journeys through the care system and how their identity needs may be met. Faith is salient to the identities of Muslim-heritage children in care (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2021). However, simplistic 'black and white' understandings of faith are inadequate to meet children's needs. In this chapter, the authors propose a more nuanced approach that considers the 'whole' identity needs of a child.

Methodological Choices: Who Is a Muslim-Heritage Child in Care?

For this study, we were interested in exploring *who* is a child of Muslim-heritage in the care system. This meant answering questions around their lives and identities prior to their coming into care and then how these evolved while in care. Our research also required a deeper reflection on what the 'Muslim-ness' of a Muslim-heritage child entailed. What did it mean to be a Muslim-heritage child in social work care? What identities were inherent to a child for it to be considered as being of Muslim-heritage? Who decides these definitions and understandings?

In order to answer these less tangible questions around identity and by drawing upon the academic backgrounds of the investigators, this research is underpinned by a sociology of religion framework. In this chapter, the focus is on lived experiences of religion rather than on theological and textual framings of religious life. It is an interdisciplinary approach that works across disciplines to study religion in its social contexts, as experienced and negotiated by people within their identities, and communities (Furseth & Repstad, 2006).

Collaborative methodologies that aim to work 'with and for' research users were central to the study, and throughout, we consulted with frontline carers and social workers and drew upon their expertise. We took an ethnographic approach that

positioned people – in this case, service providers, social workers, adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents, policymakers, legal practitioners, foster carers, adult care leavers and their families – as the makers of meaning, holders of knowledge and negotiators of identity. The research was undertaken in three phases, all of which entailed different ways of answering the question – who is a Muslim looked-after child?

Also, inherent within this research is an emphasis on intersectionality, especially as discussed later in this paper, in relation to diverse British Muslim identities. The term "intersectionality" was coined by feminist scholars to illustrate the multiple realities and layered identities that are possible within everyday human existence (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989) and the interconnections between different social hierarchies that collude to either marginalise or privilege particular actors and voices in society. An individual's identity is made up of a number of aspects – gender, ethnicity, religion, class, education, geographical location – that together determine how an individual is perceived and received by wider society, as well as how an individual perceives themselves. Theorisation around intersectionality provides a useful lens through which to understand the complex identities of Muslim-heritage children in care. Using an intersectional lens allows us to analyse what Muslim-ness means for diverse children, and how this might be taken into consideration in caring for the children.

The research was conducted in three phases. In the *first phase,* we used three datasets to estimate the number of Muslim children in the children's care system in Britain. The stage raised important findings around the ethnic diversity of British Muslims. In the *second phase,* we undertook group discussions and interviews with social workers, adopters, prospective adopters, foster carers and care leavers to understand their perspectives on the experiences of Muslim-heritage children in the care system in Britain. Interviews and group discussions were semi-structured: rather than fixed questions, we used a set of themes to guide the discussion. In all, we spoke to 41 participants (Table 1 below contains a list of people we spoke to). Sample recruitment was through gatekeepers affiliated with adoption charities, voluntary / independent sector foster care providers and adoption agencies and local authorities. Publishing requests for participants in Muslim news outlets resulted in

Table 1 Interview/Group discussion participants

	Category	Number
1	Adopters	5
2	Foster Carers	10
3	Prospective adopters	4
4	Social workers (independent fostering agencies)	4
5	Social workers (local authorities)	15
6	Care leavers	3
	TOTAL	41

contact with individuals who had adopted or were considering adopting children of Muslim heritage.

Fieldwork was conducted between May 2017 and March 2018 by this research team. The data collected was thematically analysed. As part of the discussions, among other things we investigated, was how the Muslim-ness of children was experienced and perceived by those caring for them.[1] We uncovered the nuanced ways in which children felt able or unable to articulate their faith and the myriad ways in which their faith identities were perceived. Our findings indicate a diversity of personal positionalities concerning faith, which stem from children's upbringing prior to coming into care. We will discuss this in the next sections of this chapter.

In the *third* or final post-research dissemination phase of this study, we organised workshops with 100 social work practitioners across the UK, during the period from November 2019 to February 2020. These workshops were participatory and dialogical, in that the team shared research findings with children's care professionals while also learning from their experiences. These workshops were constructed around case studies of the lived experiences of Muslim-heritage children in care whose stories were encountered within the research. In return, workshop participants shared stories of children they encountered in their professional practice. By focussing on lived experience, which is inherently diverse, we sought to move away from essentialist tropes of Islam and Muslims.

In this chapter, case studies from the research are used to achieve a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the identities of Muslim children in care. All names are pseudonyms and to minimise the risk of identification, all identifying characteristics have been anonymised. The research was conducted after securing ethical approval from Coventry University. There is a growing drive to listen to children in social work research in Britain (Roberts, 2017). However, for this research, largely due to ethical considerations around their well-being, we did not speak to any children under the age of 18. Looked-after children already face lines of questioning of numerous social workers, carers and others. Given that this research was the very first exploration of its kind and therefore of wide scope, the team felt that it was unnecessary to subject children to a further line of complicated questions. Now that this study has established a threshold for academic understandings of children's lived experience of faith, we hope to work directly with children on specific lines of enquiry.

[1] This chapter includes both new, previously unseen data as well as data that was used in our research report and other publications. Where we use previously cited data, we do so within new analytical paradigms.

Recognising the Diversity of British Muslim Communities

Research about the experiences of Muslim children in the social care system in Britain is almost non-existent (Miller & Butt, 2019). Literature on Muslim children in the care system is further challenged by contested views among Muslims on adoption. With the exception of Indonesia, Malaysia, Somalia, Tunisia, and Turkey, the laws of most Muslim majority states do not currently permit legal adoption. Instead, in some Muslim majority countries, laws permit a system of guardianship (*kafāla*), which resembles foster-parenting but is more stable (Better Care Network, 2011, 6). *Kafāla* is defined as the commitment to voluntarily take care of the maintenance, of the education and of the protection of a minor, in the same way a parent would do for a child. This type of guardianship does not sever the biological family bonds of the child or alter the descent lines for the adopting family. From this backdrop and subject to further research, it is argued here that experiences of Muslim children in care remain thin. In this section, we contextualise the experiences of Muslim-heritage children within the broader narratives of Islam and Children's social work in Britain.

A cumulative view of diverse and intersectional British Muslim identities is essential to mitigate the dual risks of essentialisation and exceptionalisation within research about Islam and Muslims. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an extensive overview of British Muslim communities (Gilliat-Ray [2010] and Weller and Cheruvallil-Contractor [2015] offer detailed explorations). However, here the authors provide an outline of relevant contextual information within which the journeys of Muslim-heritage children in the UK can be situated. According to the 2011 census, just under three million people or 4.8% of the entire UK population identify as Muslim. For many of these Muslims, intersectionality is key to their understandings of identity:

> For many Muslims living in Britain, the identity label of Muslim coexists with others that denote, for example, their national belonging (British, Scottish, Welsh or Irish); their own or their ancestral national and ethnic origins (South Asia, Middle East, Africa or South East Asia); their "race" gender, political leanings, specific forms of Islamic belief (Sunni or Shi'a, Barelwi or Deobandi); and the extent of their religious practice (practicing, believing, non-practicing, cultural or non-religious). (Weller & Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2015, 307–308)

Due to colonial history and subsequent patterns of migration, the majority of Muslims, just over two-thirds, have a family heritage in the Indian Subcontinent (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) with the remaining third of the population being a veritable reflection of the diverse Muslim world (MCB, 2015). More recent migration from the Middle East and North Africa has led to increased ethnic diversity within British Muslim communities. Barelwi, Deobandi and Tablighi Jamaat movements that originate in the Indian sub-continent are numerically strong and socially significant (Raza, 1992; Robinson, 1988), although these are by no means the only denominational groups. There is a growing Salafi presence in many British Muslim

communities as well as growing Shia communities in London and Birmingham. Furthermore, according to Census 2011, the British Muslim population is young – just over two-thirds of these young Muslims are under the age of 34. Many young people are less fixed in their notions of denominational affiliation and take a more ecumenical approach to intra-faith differences (Scott-Baumann et al., 2020). This ethno-religious diversity is significant for understanding the identities of children in care and where they are placed for their care. For example, an African-Somali heritage child would struggle to understand cultural practices in a South Asian heritage home.

As noted by Gale and Hopkins "the Muslim population [in Britain] is not only predominantly urban, but overwhelmingly concentrated in just a few cities." (Gale & Hopkins, 2009, 7) Concerns about ethnic and religious segregation have uncovered patterns of 'Muslim segregation', where Muslim communities may often live in urban clusters around local mosques, madrassas, halal food outlets and other amenities that are necessary for religious life (Peach, 2005; Phillips, 2015). Ali (2015) however, in her Muslim-focussed analysis of Census 2011 data, challenges the stereotype of self-segregating BME communities and notes the increase in residential integration. Nevertheless, the concentration of British Muslim communities in and around urban centres has important safeguarding ramifications for Muslim-heritage children placed in foster or adoptive homes. If they are recognised, this could put the placement in jeopardy.

Another important consideration in the placement of Muslim-heritage children is the diverse ways individual Muslims practice Islam in their ways of believing and levels of religious practice. For instance, for some Muslims, faith is a central aspect of their lives and identities, whereas for others, religion is on the periphery of their lives. Bowen writes about 'observing' and 'practising' Muslims (Bowen, 2007). Whereas the former may fast in Ramadan, occasionally pray and usually eat only halal food, the latter are stricter in their religious practice – they pray regularly and dress in "Islamic attire" (Bowen, 2007). Although Islam is usually positioned as a religious standpoint, for some Muslims, it can be more of a cultural identity rather than of a religious one (Cheruvallil-Contractor, Forthcoming). When placing children into foster or adoptive homes, it is important to consider what levels of religious practice the children were accustomed to in their biological homes.

Muslim identity is constructed through negotiations across ethnicity, religion and culture, leading to multiple forms of Muslim lived expression (Ross-Sheriff, 2017). By achieving an understanding of Islam as a dynamic discourse with varying ethnicities, levels of religious commitment, cultures and religious practices, child service practitioners will have a better understanding of how to care for children (Gilligan & Furness, 2006). It is such an understanding that this chapter seeks to construct and promulgate.

‘Counting’ Muslim-Heritage Children in Care

As already mentioned, on 31st March 2019, there were 78,150 looked-after children in England, of which our research suggests that approximately 4,500 are of Muslim heritage (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2018). Data shows that both numbers are increasing. Whereas the first number (the total number of children in care) is the outcome of an annual survey conducted by the UK government and is therefore fairly accurate, the second number is the result of triangulation and is, at best, an approximation. Understanding how we arrived at this number is important in recognising the significance of ethnicity for British Muslim identity. Moreover, recognising the gaps in our data, and therefore possible flaws in our calculation, underpins the urgent need for data around the religious heritage of looked-after children in the UK.

The UK government includes a question about ethnicity in its annual SSDA903[2] census of looked-after children, but it does not include a question about religion. So, we know the numbers for ethnic backgrounds of children with reasonable accuracy. Since 2001, the UK census has included a question about religion, which gives us a broad understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and religion. Finally, although the government does not ‘count’ the number of Muslim children in care, local authorities often, but not always, hold this data within local records.

We attempted to access this local data through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to 22 local authorities in the Midlands of the UK. As local authorities are not required to collect data on religion and language (Selwyn et al., 2010), there is a lack of consistency in recording information on black and minority ethnicity children entering the care of the local authority (Barn et al., 1997; Huggins, 2012; Lowe & Murch, 2002). In the end, we decided to draw upon the precedence of using ethnicity to ‘count’ the number of Muslims and other ethnic minority religious groups prior to the 2001 inclusion of religion within the national census (Peach, 1990). A process of triangulation was used to approximate the number of Muslim-heritage children in care, by comparing data on ethnicity and religion from the UK Census 2011, the national census of looked-after children and the limited data we collected through our FOIs.

This figure may increase due to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) (5,070 in 2019) often being of Muslim heritage, which was confirmed by our qualitative data. For example, while interviewing the UASC manager at a local authority children’s care service provider, we attempted to identify religious identity by examining the ethnicity and first names[3] of the UASCs who were under the

[2] The SSDA903 return collects information about looked after children in the UK. It should be completed for every child in care.

[3] Second names and addresses where children lived were masked from the researcher to protect children’s anonymity.

care of this local authority. Furthermore, the manager, in her professional capacity, had personally interacted with the majority of these children and thus had first-hand information about their faith identities. Our examination concluded that 19 out of 25 UASCs (76%) in the care of this LA were of Muslim heritage.

In the context of human geography research and the complexities of everyday life, Harrowell, Davies and Disney (2018) write about the significance of failure. They argue that failure should be recognised as a central component of human geography research and indeed, all research. They encourage researchers to write "vulnerably" and to use failure proactively and provocatively as a "powerful resource to improve research practice and outcomes, reconsidering and giving voice to it as everyday, productive, and necessary" (Harrowell et al., 2018, 30). Within our research dissemination plans we use the lack of accurate statistical data on the religious heritage of looked-after children to lobby the government to include a question around religion in SSDA903 returns, and to work with social work practitioners to foster deeper and more nuanced understandings of the faith-identities of looked-after children.

The emphasis on ethnicity in national statistics can translate into how children's needs are met. For example, during interviews a devout Muslim care leaver told us how she and her brothers were placed in South Asian Hindu and South Asian Sikh homes. While the children were reasonably comfortable and secure, there was no provision for their faith needs which led to them feeling frustrated and unable to settle. When they requested to be moved, a social worker working with them commented that "But aren't you South Asians all the same?". This case is discussed in detail in other work (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2018, 2021). However, we cite it here to argue that data can often lead practice, even where the data is limited. This is echoed by Tamsin Yawar, who writes that when Muslim-heritage children are classed as black or Asian this can undermine their identity and hinder reunion. According to her, "Matching religion is especially important for Muslims." (1992, as quoted in Selwyn et al., 2010)

The manager of an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) that primarily works with children of Muslim and Christian heritage spoke to us about the need to have a clearer sense of the number of children involved. This IFA has been successful in recruiting Muslim and Christian carers and have successfully placed hard-to-place children in long term foster homes. In the quote below, he reflects about the importance of faith in helping children settle into a foster placement, while also articulating his concern about the lack of exact numbers, which hampers his team's ability to plan for the future:

> We work within an ethos that bears in mind children's faith needs, and we find that our approach helps children settle down sooner. Our work has been commended and encouraged by a number of local authorities, even those outside of the Midlands. But without a sense of the numbers of children we do not know where and how we should expand our work.

In this section, we have discussed the politics and complexities of attempting to count the number of Muslim-heritage children in the care system in the UK, and the

significance of ethnicity in determining how and where children's needs are met. We were transparent about the flaws in our methods, but are hopeful that our failure can lead to better data and therefore better provision for these children. In the next section, we use our qualitative data to explore further aspects of Muslim heritage in children's intersectional identities.

More than Religion and Ethnicity: Further Aspects Complicating the Identity of Muslim-Heritage Children

We start this section with a case study from our qualitative fieldwork. Laura, a white, nominally-Christian woman, is a highly experienced foster carer. She has been a foster carer for over 25 years, and during this time the majority of children she cared for were of Muslim-heritage. So much so, that she has become the 'Muslim-expert' foster carer for the local authority, both through personally fostering Muslim-heritage children as well as through the professional advice which she freely and happily offered to other foster carers in relation to the needs of these children. She also had close links to her local Muslim community, established through taking a number of children over the years to the local mosque. She told us about two unrelated teenage Muslim males – Bilal and Waheed, both of Afghan heritage, who were placed with her at around the same time. As she always did, she took the two children to the mosque to introduce them to the local Muslim community. However, she immediately noticed that each child reacted differently to the mosque and its community. Whereas Bilal enjoyed the visit and said he would go back soon, Waheed withdrew and was silent throughout the visit. Being an experienced foster carer, she realised something was amiss and spoke to Waheed at length, to understand the reasons for his clear reluctance to engage with the mosque community. She discovered that he had been brought up within a secular family that had very little affinity to organised religion. She realised that Waheed had different needs, and so organised other activities and community links for him. Due to their similar ethnic and religious backgrounds, both boys grew to like each other. They spoke the same language and developed strong bonds with each other, but while in her care they retained their different attitudes to religion.

In her interview with us she reflected on how despite both being of Muslim and Afghan heritage and similar age, these two children had very different upbringings and therefore very different identities and care needs. Whereas prior to coming into care, Bilal had been brought up in a home where religious and cultural practices relating to Islam were upheld, Waheed had had a largely secular upbringing and only nominally identified as Muslim.

The experience articulated in this anonymised case study demonstrates the need for understanding the intersections between religion and other aspects of a child's identity. Both children had different reactions to the mosque, which stemmed from how they were brought up in their biological homes, and the level of religious

commitment and practice in their lives before coming into care. We have also encountered stories of young people who have suffered victimisation and abuse from abusers who described themselves as religious or Muslim. When taken into care, such children may insist on completely eschewing religion from their lives. Applying an intersectional lens, it becomes clear that, in addition to ethnicity and religion, the 'ways of believing' or 'level of commitment to religion' also determined *how children needed to be cared for* and also in this case, largely due to Laura's experience, *what care they were given*. In our research, we have encountered numerous stories of young Muslims in care who, due to the nurturing of their religious identity they received in their foster homes, have established bonds of attachment with their foster carers. We have also encountered cases where their faith needs have not been met.

In our fieldwork, other identity considerations came up. Male and female experiences of religion were different. This is due to how cultural and religious practices around Islam are gendered within communities. Whereas in religious families, both boys and girls will attend madrassah (or religious school), in some communities, boys will have more access to mosques and congregational prayer than girls. According to a report published in 2017, 28% of mosques in Britain do not offer facilities for women, and up to 50% of all South Asian-run mosques do not accommodate them (Muslims in Britain, 2017). Even where mosques offer space to women, this might be withdrawn for the weekly Friday congregational prayers, or it might be frowned upon within certain communities for women to attend. Some girls will have been accustomed to gender segregation in some social contexts. Others will not have experienced gender segregation at all. Some girls will have experienced Islam as egalitarian and equal, while others will have experienced patriarchy (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2012). These two narratives of Islam are antithetical to each other, yet in relation to the lived experiences and care needs of the child or children narrating them, both may be true and need to be accounted for in the decisions that are made for these children.

In making decisions around incorporating issues of faith within looked-after children's care needs, our research shows that it is important to consider the child's age. A baby or a younger child will have very little comprehension of his or her faith heritage, and its identification with a particular faith largely stems from its parent's choice to give it a faith identity. An older child will have more comprehension of his or her faith, but more so in relation to cultural practices rather than the tenets of faith. Depending on attitudes to faith within their biological families, teenage children may have more developed and possibly textual and theological understandings of their faith.

In British social work practice, when a child is taken into care, its biological parents' preferences continue to hold weight in law and practice, unless the child is adopted, in which case parental rights are transferred to the adoptive parents. If a biological parent stipulates that the child is Muslim and should be placed in a Muslim home, social workers will include this request within their decision-making on providing looked-after care. In contrast, in the United States of America, there are more complex negotiations, as the care system has considerably more non-profit

religious organisations providing foster care and adoption services (Rotabi et al., 2017). If these faith organisations are in public-private partnerships, while many do hire qualified social workers, they are not required by law to do so which may result in a lack of agency expertise in understanding the religious beliefs and values of Muslim-heritage children (Rotabi et al., 2017). Moreover, although legislation states it is a violation of rights to try to convert a child from Islam to any other religion (Article 14 of the CRC [Convention on the Rights of the Child]), according to Eby et al. (2011), as some Christian foster families are motivated by their faith to foster, the possibility of foster families attempting to convert a child of Muslim heritage to Christianity is still present.

Due to the diversity within Islam and Muslims in Britain, intra-faith relations between different Muslim denominational groups can, on occasion, be fraught and tense. For example, tensions can exist between Sunni and Shia groups or between more literal Salafi or Wahhabi groups and more mystically-informed Sufi groups. In our research, we encountered the story of a Sunni Muslim child being placed in a Qadiyani home. Qadiyanis are a sect of Islam which Sunni Muslims largely see as heretic. Qadiyanis are banned from performing the Hajj and in many countries face persecution from Sunni Muslims. When this Sunni child was placed in a Qadiyani foster home, he encountered prejudice and discrimination. Ultimately social workers moved him to a different foster placement. Pitcher and Jaffar (2018) relate a similar story that they encountered in their research.

A final aspect of children's intersectional identity is their culture. By culture, this research alludes to the social and communal norms within which they have been brought up, and which are not always rooted in religion. In our research, we came across children who were branded as troublemakers because they ate with their fingers and insisted on sitting on the floor while eating, instead of sitting at the dining table. Culture is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional phenomenon, and cultural impact can range from language to food choices, attitudes, worldviews, and even entertainment preferences.

This section draws upon qualitative data to discuss a Muslim-heritage child's identity in relation to its ethnicity, commitment to faith, gender, age, denominational affiliation and culture. There may well be other significant aspects of a Muslim-heritage child's identity that we have not discussed here.

Implications for Social Work Practice

This research shows that Muslim-heritage children's identity is strongly related to faith. To meet their care needs, social work practitioners need to consider all aspects of their identity (including faith) when deciding how these children should live their lives. Social workers' case recording of basic details such as a child's ethnicity, religion, and culture, affect policy initiation, planning and outcomes at every level of the care system. Social workers' familiarity with the implications of faith in identity formation might also help in adoption planning for minority ethnic children.

One implication is for greater consideration to be given to the positionality of social workers, including ways to decolonise social care practices. If social workers are approaching religion through a white Christian and/or secular framing this may limit their ability to recognise and provide support for the child to understand his or her own life story (Furness & Gilligan, 2010). For example, in one of our case studies, a social worker noted that at a looked-after-child review, there was uncritical examination by the review panel of why a teenage Muslim girl stopped wearing her hijab within a few weeks of her foster placement. Rather than inquiring about other possible causal factors, such as being the only Muslim girl in a predominately white community, this act was seen by the panel as signifying progression. This may or may not have been the case, but social workers presupposing that the removal of the hijab was agentive disregards what some children of Muslim heritage could gain from their faith practices, as well as from their notions of political rights and self-determination.

Another barrier in delivering the appropriate support for Muslim children in care, foster carers and adopters is the inadequacy of training for social workers on the pervasiveness of Islam in forming identity (Gilligan & Furness, 2006; Modood, 2005). Several studies found Muslim identity is constructed through traversing and transforming race, religion and dominant cultural boundaries to create multiple forms of Muslim lived expression (Chaney & Church, 2017; Ross-Sheriff, 2017). Training programmes that saw the reimagining of Muslim beliefs as diverse contextual expression could assist social workers in challenging biases and misinformation on Islam and adoption, which remains a contested interpretation within Muslim communities (Frazer & Selwyn, 2005). Learning how to navigate Muslim beliefs and ethnicity in a British context would see child social care professionals making decisions on the adoption and fostering of Muslim children that are more reflective of the importance of Muslim communal values (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003; Barise, 2003, 2005; Carlson et al., 2005).

The lack of empirical research on the role of the social workers in translating faith practices and beliefs stymies their ability to deliver solutions that are transformative for the lives of Muslim children in the care system (Newbigging & Thomas, 2011). For social care practice to provide for the needs of children of Muslim heritage, it would benefit from an understanding that everyday religious practices are negotiations between multiple identities in different contexts (McGuire, 2008). Islam, in common with other faiths, is found in embodied practices and tangible manifestations of religious expressions. Therefore, the way Muslims dress, eat, are educated and even play, becomes, over time, a form of worship or an expression of spirituality. It is not enough to ask social workers and foster carers to adjust their practices to accommodate Muslim-heritage children without interrogating what that looks like in lived practices. Social care policy needs to respond to the way religions shape and are shaped by the ordinary and everyday ways, in which they are lived, experienced and perceived. Building on this, social workers need to recognise that far from being deterministic, religious identities are continually evolving in response to religious and cultural norms. Such a reflective professional stance in relation to

Islam or indeed, any religion could lead to a more appropriate provision which meets children's needs.

Finally, it is important to return once again to the issue of lack of data on the religion of looked-after children. Measures to introduce greater information gathering about Muslim looked-after children will address the inconstancy Selwyn and Wijedesa (2011) noted between local authorities with the recording of data on the religiosity of children in care. This means that local government responses to Muslim children's needs are guided by individual perceptions rather than collective responses which identify the level of Muslim orthopraxis of religious beliefs in order to meet the needs of the family (Chaney & Church, 2017). A key recommendation for social work policymakers in the UK is that they include a question about religious heritage in the annual statistics for looked-after children. Accurate statistics are essential for predicting and planning for the care needs of these children. Minimum standards for fostering require local authority fostering services to ensure sufficient numbers of foster carers so they can be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. Having a clearer sense of the numbers of Muslim children in care will have an immediate positive impact on the achievement of this standard.

Conclusions: Who Is a Muslim-Heritage Child?

Children need permanent and secure homes within which they can explore their identities and evolve as human beings, citizens and family members: homes in which they have a sense of security, continuity, stability and belonging. Recent UK government policy has tried to expedite the process through which permanent homes are found for children who cannot be looked after by their biological parents. In this chapter, in line with social work recommendations for homes that meet the 'whole needs' of the child, we have sought to explore the whole identity as a crucial part of the needs of a Muslim-heritage child.

As shown in our research, a Muslim child's identity is made up of its faith in addition to a number of other aspects – here we have discussed ethnicity, ways of believing, age, gender, denominational affiliation and culture – constituting who he or she is. In order to meet the 'whole needs' of the child, it is important that social workers achieve child-led narratives of their identities to understand their care needs. This does not require new classifications within social work or significant new training on religious literacy. Instead, we recommend that social workers raise their religious literacy through normal discursive processes of dialogue and conversation with looked-after children and those who care for them. Through open discussions and a recognition of the complexities of everyday life, it should be possible to meet children's diverse needs. Such an approach prevents the essentialisation or homogenisation of Muslim-heritage children as having to meet a particular predetermined set of criteria. This is a complicated stance which requires reflective practice yet will allow for more dialogic and less didactic evaluations of children's whole needs and subsequently provision for these needs.

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Islamic Social Work within the Framework of the Welfare System: Observations from the German Case

Hansjörg Schmid

Abstract The development possibilities for Islamic social work are closely linked to the respective state's welfare framework. The German system provides an insightful example, as it is characterised by a significant incorporation of religious welfare providers. In the sense of an "affirmative genealogy" (Hans Joas), the German welfare system can be understood as open to religious pluralism and social change. This chapter analyses interactions between the state, existing welfare organisations and Muslim providers, focusing on their respective legitimation strategies. Inclusive and more exclusive interpretations are presented by different parties. The openness towards all beneficiaries demanded of Muslim welfare providers could perhaps lead to a secularisation of Islamic social work. However, theological reflection enables an Islamic profile to be reconciled with general social responsibility.

Keywords Islam · Social work · Welfare · Integration · Theology of liberation

Introduction

Many studies on Islamic social work either deal with the relationships between service providers and beneficiaries or with underlying religious motivations. A key factor, which often receives less attention, is the welfare system in which Islamic social work is situated. This framework and the interaction between the state and Islamic bodies are the subject of the following chapter. Despite tendencies towards globalisation and Europeanisation, national context remains central for the development of welfare states. According to Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, "the national development of welfare states in Europe remained highly idiosyncratic, in that development was driven by the interaction of national factors" (2012, 32). Among these are cultural, political and institutional factors: each welfare system regulates a division of responsibilities and tasks between the state and social bodies.

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This analysis pertains to the German welfare state, which, contrary to "liberal" and "social-democratic" systems, has been classified as "conservative" and "corporatist", with a strong focus on institutions and a delegation of tasks to non-governmental providers (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 27; Clegg, 2019). This enables those in need of assistance to choose from a plurality of offers from different providers. A significant place is attributed to non-statutory welfare organisations, which entails a high degree of state support and financing.

In Germany, six umbrella associations are represented in the Federal Working Group for Non-Statutory Welfare Work (BAGFW), which has existed in various forms since 1924 and represents a common platform and lobbying organisation (Zimmer et al., 2009). They form part of the state-regulated system and have different humanitarian or religious backgrounds. Besides the Red Cross, the workers' welfare association *AWO* (*Arbeiterwohlfahrt*) and the independent humanitarian welfare association *Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband*, there are three organisations with a religious profile: the Roman-Catholic *Caritas*, the Protestant *Diakonie* and the central Jewish welfare organisation (ZWST). The services of the non-statutory welfare organisations are highly professionalised and are offered to all beneficiaries, independent of their religious affiliation. This particular constellation is easily transferable to other contexts, but it shows the effects of intensive interaction with the state.

Between 4.4 and 4.7 million Muslims live in Germany, of a total population of 83 million. More than half are of Turkish origin, with the Middle East and the Balkans being further important regions of origin (Stichs, 2016). As migratory waves have only occurred since the 1960s, Germany is not a classic country of immigration; as a result, integration policy efforts have been delayed. Nonetheless, dialogue and integration with the Muslim population have played a central role for around 20 years. Both local mosque associations and manifold umbrella organisations on a regional or national level are involved in these activities. As in the case of migrant organisations in general (Pries & Sezgin, 2012), the social services they offer can be seen as "self-help", that is, as bodies of people in similar situations, or with similar problems and interests (Handel, 2017, 300). Their cultural sensitivity allows them to reach target groups which are not, or not primarily, the focus of established providers. In this way, the activities of Muslim associations have also come into the spotlight of state integration policy (Fülling, 2019). Today, this poses a double challenge in the German context: on one hand, there are emancipatory efforts on the part of Islamic bodies to make their self-help activities part of welfare work and to achieve recognition for a civic engagement that is usually not publicly visible (Peucker, 2016). On the other hand, there is a debate taking place as to how the German welfare system can be further developed in the light of the changing composition of the population (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016; Khalfaoui, 2016; von Wensierski, 2016). This results in a double dynamic, emanating both from Muslim organisations and political efforts.

Since the central issue is the interrelation between Islamic bodies, the state and existing welfare providers, all these relationships will be examined. Social work activities within the welfare system are understood as institutionalised social

practices legitimated by discourses (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 79; Van Leeuwen, 2008, 20). Thereby a normative basis is provided: "Legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives." (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 111) Throughout the chapter there will be a focus on various legitimation discourses based on authority, value systems, rational arguments or narratives (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 105–123; Fairclough, 2004, 98). These legitimation discourses provide a rationale for the welfare system as a whole, or for specific actions of welfare providers, be it the state, established welfare organisations or Muslim associations. Beyond the analysis of interpretative patterns (Breuer, 2019, 315), this approach enables the different types of "construction of legitimation" to be distinguished (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 105). A comparison between types of discourses enables the identification of "strategies for legitimation" (Fairclough, 2004, 100) proper to the various protagonists and their mutual relationships.

The initial focus among the legitimation discourses will be on the German welfare system, from a historical and socio-ethical point of view, focussing on the significance of religion (section "Genealogy and Value Orientation in the German Welfare System"). Subsequently, the state's religious and integration policy on a federal level is considered (section "State Support – Between Integration and Religious Policy"). In the next step, the role of existing welfare bodies is examined, focusing on their resources (section "The Role of Established Welfare Providers"). Finally, the focus shifts to Muslim organisations, with discussion of organisational developments and projects; then, the discourses surrounding their rationale are identified (section "Welfare Activities and Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Organisations"). In concluding the comparative discussion, consequences and perspectives for Islamic social work in the German welfare state are illustrated (section "Conclusion: Perspectives for Islamic Social Work in a Plural Welfare System").

Genealogy and Value Orientation in the German Welfare System

In recent years, comparative welfare state research has rediscovered religion as a dynamic factor, but this has mainly been related to Western Christianity and its potential for modernisation. Summarising an anthology on religion and the welfare state in Europe, Gabriel et al. conclude:

> In Western Christianity (...) two elements came together which culturally can be counted as being among the conditions of welfare state development: the collective assumption of responsibility for the well-being of individuals on the one hand and the esteem (...) of the individual or the person on the other hand. In the sphere of influence of Orthodoxy just the second element has remained weak until today. Something similar can be observed for the Islamic tradition. (Gabriel et al., 2013, 495)

According to this model, two specific features of Western Christianity have had a productive effect on the welfare state. These dynamics did not come to the fore in secular Turkey, which is treated in the above-mentioned volume (Celebi &

Göztepe-Celebi, 2013). But it cannot be excluded that comparable developments may also come about in Islam (Crisp, 2014, 26), reinforced by a welfare state open to religion, as is the case in Germany.

The genesis of the welfare state in Germany has led to an "institutional tradition" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 111, 186) based on a normative system, which can be better understood in analogy to Hans Joas' genealogy of human rights (Schmid, 2017). This is also obvious insofar as the welfare state in Western contexts is built on the foundation of social human rights (Kaufmann, 2013, 37–38). Joas combines a historical and an existential approach. According to him, at the centre of the concept of "affirmative genealogy" lies a "call" or "appeal", "because recourse to the processes of ideal formation, the genesis of values, (…) opens our minds to the way in which historically embodied meaning calls upon us" (Joas, 2013, 127). Genealogy is affirmative in the sense that viewing the genesis of values does not leave the subject indifferent, but rather places it in charge. This creates a context of meaning that extends from the past into the future: the starting point is initially a historical meaning that is generated in the past but points beyond its conditions of origin (Joas, 2013, 134–135). "We hear this appeal in a particular historical present and within this present it is oriented toward new action geared toward the future." (Joas, 2013, 124) The historical sense is perceived and actualised in the specific context of the present. It offers new orientation and motivates future-oriented action, through which values are made real and history is brought to life (Joas, 2013, 126, 134–135). Thus, the history of welfare system development in Germany is not only a memory or a background for understanding the current situation, but also an impulse for the further development of this system.

As values are "upheld by institutions and embodied in practices" (Joas, 2013, 135) the function of the welfare system can be seen to conserve and keep alive the values of its historical origins. However, this does not mean sticking with the status quo. Conversely, the welfare system in Germany can be understood as an expression of a generalisation of values, a term going back to Talcott Parsons, in the sense "that value traditions may develop a more general and abstract understanding of their content, without being entirely uprooted from the specific traditions and experiences that are the source of affective binding force for the actors involved" (Joas, 2013, 180–181). General content on one hand, and specific roots and binding forces on the other, are therefore not contradictory. The generalisation of values is not only an expression of social change, but "extends across many stages and is frequently conflictual" (Joas, 2013, 179). Such considerations can also bear fruit when considering the welfare system.

As with human rights, welfare and its historical roots are also at risk of being perceived as a largely Christian exclusivity. However, early forms of charity and philanthropy have already been found in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece (Handel, 2017, 42–45). The concepts of affirmative genealogy and the generalisation of values also enable a broader perspective. When looking at the history of the development of the German welfare state, several different roots can be identified, including the labour movement as well as Protestant, Catholic and Jewish activism (Stolleis, 2013). This seems to provide a basis for openness to different religious or

ideological orientations. In the nineteenth century, private welfare organisations, mostly in the form of associations, emerged, often compensating for the lack of state social measures. After the First World War, the major challenge of poverty arose. There was political discussion about the relationship between state responsibility and the participation of welfare organisations. Finally, in 1926, six organisations were recognised as umbrella organisations – a system that was maintained after the Second World War. Jewish welfare work was incorporated into the welfare system in 1926, but it occupied a distinct role taking care of Jewish people in need, as the Jews represented a social minority (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 39; Hennings, 2008, 39–42). History therefore illustrates how different bodies were integrated into a system which was gradually being built and which has been characterised by religious and ideological openness.

Today, however, this system is often criticised. For instance, recognised welfare organisations are alleged to form a kind of cartel, lobbying only for their own interests. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether, with the differentiation and disintegration of traditional social milieus, established welfare organisations will still have the necessary binding force to perform client-oriented work. Critics also observe that the welfare associations have become more similar and that their specific value orientation is fading into the background (Boeßenecker, 2005, 35–36). In a recent article, sociologist Karl-Heinz Boeßenecker labels the German welfare system as outdated and does not see a solution in the establishment of a seventh welfare organisation to integrate Muslim communities (Boeßenecker, 2017, 33). This represents a rejection of any affirmative genealogy of the welfare system and is a plea for a complete paradigm change. Contrary to this view, however, the secularisation tendencies of existing welfare organisations can also be understood as an expression of the generalisation of values. In the sense of a future orientation rooted in values, further developments of the system are to be expected. Islamic bodies could give new impetus to awareness of such values. When welfare work was on the rise, church associations had great social influence; today, Muslim organisations do not by any means have a similar level of impact. Nevertheless, the dynamic genealogy of the welfare state indicates that further developments and adaptations of the system could certainly remain in line with its basic ideas. Its generalised values can form the basis for integrating new bodies and organisations.

State Support – Between Integration and Religious Policy

While in the system of non-statutory welfare work in Germany any state intervention is usually regarded as contradictory to the system (BAMF, 2015, 88), integration and religious policy actively intervene in this field. In its annual report for 2016, the Council of Experts of German Foundations for Integration and Migration speaks of “multiculturalism in religious policy” and explicitly mentions the “establishment of new, religiously-based welfare associations” as an expression of “parity claims” (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, 2016, 17).

While religious affairs in Germany fall under the responsibility of the 18 federal states, the German Islam Conference (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz*, DIK) has existed on a federal level since 2006, as a central platform for exchange on Islam and political issues affecting Muslims. DIK's approach is characterised by how it links issues of religion and integration (Fülling, 2019, 454). It is known for having established binding dialogue with key Muslim representatives at the highest political level. After DIK having dealt with various topics such as secularism, legal issues, media, security, religious education in schools, Islamic theology in universities and imam training, the topic of welfare was brought to the fore in the legislative period 2013–2017 (Charchira, 2017). As with previous topics, DIK's function can be seen as threefold: firstly, it provides data by mandating empirical studies; secondly, it enables discussion, consultation and strategy-development; thirdly, it contributes to strategy implementation through pilot projects. The whole process contributes substantially to political agenda-setting.

Beginning with DIK, new forms of project funding have emerged, initially for work with refugees, which makes use of the resources Muslim associations can offer and simultaneously assists these organisations to become more professional. The programme is based on the following credo:

> The Federal Government considers it essential that the broadest possible spectrum of civil society groups in the Federal Republic of Germany continue to work for the integration of refugees. Islamic initiatives and institutions as well as organisations and initiatives of migrants represent an important contact point for many refugees and can serve as a bridge for integration and the promotion of social cohesion. (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2019)

Here, there are two underlying legitimations: (a) supporting civil society in a broad sense, which is a key characteristic of the German welfare state (Kaufmann, 2013, 176–177), and (b) integrating Muslim organisations in particular. The project *Moscheen für Integration* (Mosques for Integration), started in 2019 and linked to DIK, refers to the same legitimations: "The aim is to make their diverse social and civil society work more visible, more accessible and more strongly anchored in German society." (BMI, 2019) The focus of this seven-million-euro programme is to provide support for local mosque associations, in order to foster their visibility, accessibility and anchorage in Germany.

The positions and intentions linked to social welfare are concisely summarised in the following extract from a longer 2015 document, which presents the results of a DIK steering committee session comprised of 11 state representatives, ten Muslim organisation representatives and four further experts in the field from research institutes or welfare associations. This jointly-formulated document presents the major guidelines of the political agenda:

> The aim of this dialogue is to improve the religious and social participation of the Muslim population in Germany, to give greater recognition to existing contributions of Muslims and Islamic organisations to religious and cultural life and society in Germany, and to further develop the partnership between government and Islamic organisations. (…) Social welfare is a central issue for cooperation between government and religious communities. Muslims see Germany as their home. They are part of this country. For this reason, their increasing participation in society is both desirable and natural. Subsidiarity and freedom of choice are

> fundamental principles of non-governmental welfare services. Like other religious groups, Muslims too have the right to organise social welfare services on a confessional basis. Government and society are called on to help establish Islamic non-profit social welfare organisations in Germany. Islamic social welfare institutions are open to all and thus have an integrative effect, helping ensure social cohesion. The mostly voluntary engagement of Islamic providers of social welfare and especially of Islamic congregations deserves greater recognition. (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2015, 1–2)

This quotation encapsulates some key terms for the whole document: "recognition/to be recognised" is used nine times in the document, "participation/to participate" 18 times and "cooperation" 16 times. There is an appreciation of already "existing contributions", which are in most cases voluntary. The document makes a very clear statement concerning two disputed issues: Muslims are seen as an integral part of Germany; and the openness of Islamic welfare institutions "to all" as well as their "integrative effect" is emphasised in an authoritative way. Building on this foundation, the following aspects are highlighted: greater recognition and promotion (1); the "need for religiously sensitive social services for Muslims" (2); and creating awareness and understanding of Muslim contributions, which seem to have the "potential for social welfare in Germany" (3). In other words, the focus lies rather on what already exists than on deficits. The approach can therefore be characterised as positive and resource-oriented; it is the expression of a policy which is interested in promotion, cooperation and support for religions. As the German system of cooperation is characterised by government support (Fox, 2018, 134), the idea is to implement recognition processes through DIK, so that Muslim organisations can equally profit from state support. The text makes no explicit reference to historical arguments, but is focused on values like integration, participation and openness. Islamic bodies are not classified as deficient but are positively associated with such values, which results in obligations for the state.

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, DIK has also been interpreted as a racial discourse, shaping Muslim subjects according to a pre-defined hegemonic-state model, applying technologies of power (Hernández Aguilar, 2018). This discourse is based on "racial historicism, producing two different historical paths of development for Germans and Muslims" (44) and therefore expecting the assimilation of Muslims. DIK is positioned to assume the function of "guide in the historical development of Muslims" (228). Hernández Aguilar leaves a slight possibility for a positive emancipatory function: "The DIK itself can be used to channel and subvert hegemonic power. This institution can be set in motion to problematise the problematisation of Muslims itself" (234). Concerning the welfare system, the state disposes of regulatory powers over all providers. The emphasis on "recognition" in the cited DIK document can be seen as a sign of emancipation: DIK has institutionalised encounters between Muslim representatives and state officials on the highest level. This strengthens symbolic integration, contributing to the inclusion of "a particular group into the history and shared memory of a national community" (Cesari, 2015, 803). The discursive setting corresponds to the system of cooperation between state and religious communities in Germany; the dialogue also has some impact on legislation and further state measures.

To sum up, a certain ambivalence remains as to the assimilation required by Muslims in the DIK. However, there are strong elements of recognition and participation. This interpretation of the welfare system, making a strong appeal to include Muslims in the future, expresses the affirmative nature of this system's genealogy. Similar areas of cooperation, such as the introduction of confessional Islamic religious education in state schools, have previously been the subject of dialogue with Muslim organisations (Euchner, 2018). In each case, it is a matter of negotiating the modalities and framework conditions for cooperation between the state and Muslim organisations.

The Role of Established Welfare Providers

Besides the state, established welfare providers play a key intermediary role in the German subsidiary welfare system when it comes to Muslim welfare activities. A central question is thus whether established providers would rather defend their monopoly or become pioneers of pluralisation and advocates for Muslim organisations. As in other countries, varying degrees of openness to minorities among "majority religion welfare provisions" have been observed (Fokas, 2017, 285). The Experts Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration depicted this situation as follows:

> Whether a new religiously (in this case: Muslim) oriented welfare association is necessary also depends on the extent to which the established associations are prepared to become interculturally open, in the sense that they take into consideration special needs. (Sachverständigenrat, 2016, 120)

In line with this statement, the less the specific needs of Muslims are taken into account by established welfare providers, the more likely it is that a Muslim welfare organisation will be required. However, Muslims' demand for professional services outside the family is likely to increase in the future and reinforce the need for a Muslim welfare association. Since such an organisation can only result from a long development process, the statement of the Experts Council could be paraphrased as follows: especially when there is intensive interaction between an interculturally and inter-religiously open-minded established association and Islamic bodies, it can pave the way for a Muslim welfare association. Therefore, empowerment strategies through partnerships with existing associations have been developed to integrate associations that are not (yet) established into existing communication structures (Strube & Koc, 2019, 26).

The increasing pluralisation of the population is accompanied by processes to promote intercultural and inter-religious sensitivity (Holm, 2012). Intercultural opening is understood here as a specific sensitivity for people with a history of migration (Fong, 2009), whereas interreligious opening focuses on the religious dimension of culture. Both can be seen as common challenges for all welfare providers, including Muslim and Christian ones (Nagel, 2019). For a long time, the

workers' welfare association AWO was particularly concerned with migrants from Islamic countries, while Christian migrants were supported by the churches. Besides economic pressure and secularisation (Gabriel, 2016; Hien, 2019), intercultural and interreligious issues represent a major challenge for *Caritas* and *Diakonie* as welfare associations with a Christian background. These issues encompass three dimensions (Schmid, 2017):

1. Welcoming beneficiaries from different cultural and religious backgrounds has become an integral part of the self-conception of *Caritas* and *Diakonie*. They refer to universal love and God's will to save all people. In some fields – such as pregnancy counselling – they reach a high proportion of Muslims (BAMF, 2015, 105–106). Nevertheless, there are barriers to migrants in general, and to Muslims in particular, making use of these services, even if such obstacles have been partly overcome in recent years (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 52–53).
2. Working with a large spectrum of beneficiaries requires culturally- and religiously-sensitive attitudes from staff. Employees belonging to other religions can play an important bridging role (BAMF, 2015, 98–101). While this was originally ruled out due to the associations' confessional nature, currently nonetheless opening processes can be observed (Eurich, 2017, 147–148). Understanding charity with a Christian orientation in a broadly inclusive sense makes it possible to participate regardless of one's religious affiliation (Albrecht, 2013, 80).
3. On an institutional level, collaboration with Islamic organisations has been initiated. Asymmetries regarding the degree of professionalisation and available financial resources may represent a challenge to such collaboration. However, by working together, asymmetries may be reduced: in the meantime, several such collaborations have opened up an important space for encounters.

All three dimensions are intertwined: familiarity with Muslim clients and employees prepares organisations for cooperation and creates a basis for it. This cooperation can then form a bridge for Muslim organisations to the welfare system. However, since this can in turn create increased competition for Christian associations, the question arises as to what extent the latter are prepared to take such steps. This ambivalence will be illustrated in the following two examples:

On the basis of experiences collaborating with a Muslim welfare organisation, the Berlin *Caritas* director, Ulrike Kostka, insisted that: "The establishment of Islamic welfare associations at various levels would be an important step towards integration. But it would also be a prerequisite that their services are not only open to Muslims." (Kostka, 2017, 200) In this, she formulates the condition that Islamic welfare associations have to adapt to general standards to legitimate state support. In her argument, "integration" plays a central role because it is "a constitutive characteristic of Christianity" (Kostka, 2017, 189) – an argument that is widely advocated in the political debate.

The statement of the president of *Caritas* Germany 3 years previously (in 2014) was more reluctant: *Caritas* can provide expertise, but Muslims have to become active themselves and all kinds of paternalism should be avoided: "Nor should existing welfare organisations want to interfere in a paternalistic helper-manner and

play the obstetrician." (Neher, 2014) He also mentions that the access of Muslims to services provided by *Caritas* and other organisations has been self-evident for a long time and that Muslim associations would have to fulfil the same requirements concerning intercultural sensitivity. Regarding DIK, he warns, referring to the history of *Caritas*: "Never before have state institutions founded welfare associations – this must also apply today, because it would simply contradict the nature of free welfare work." (Neher, 2014).

These two examples show how the development of Muslim welfare organisations is viewed with slightly different attitudes. In the first example, reference is made to the common value of integration, with an orientation towards the future – a value which plays a key role in the context of political debates linked to DIK. In the second example, reference is made to a historical narrative linked to a rational argument of analogy ("this must also apply"), in order to exclude strong external support and to legitimate the position of *Caritas*. This is an example of an argument based on affirmative genealogy, however limited to a more restrictive sense of independent self-organisation. Common to both is the expectation that Muslim welfare organisations should be open to all beneficiaries, independent of their religious orientation.

Welfare Activities and Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Organisations

In German Muslim welfare, there are both top-down and bottom-up processes, each with their own dynamics (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 132–133). The following section focuses on Muslim welfare providers, in three parts: firstly, some light will be shed on welfare activities, with an emphasis on local associations (section "Social Services Provided by Local Mosque Associations and Specialised Providers"). This will be followed by an analysis of the legitimation discourses of selected umbrella organisations (section "Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Umbrella Organisations"). Finally, a link will be made to theological discourses which may provide further legitimation (section "Islamic Theological Justifications for Universal Welfare").

Social Services Provided by Local Mosque Associations and Specialised Providers

Many mosques can be seen as multifunctional community centres, with a large range of activities going beyond religion in a narrow sense. As far as the social services of local mosque associations are concerned, the studies of the German Islam Conference provide a fairly solid data basis (Halm et al., 2012; Halm & Sauer,

2015). The studies show that religious and social services offered by mosque associations are not in competition, but rather complement each other (Halm et al., 2012, 78). According to their information, between 36.5 and 43.2% of local associations offer health, educational or social counselling (Halm et al., 2012, 77). In the field of services for young people, 78.8% offer homework assistance, 48% vocational orientation and 47.8% language support, thus contributing to school and vocational integration (Halm & Sauer, 2015, 49–50). In addition, there are often counselling services related to education, addiction, violence and discrimination (Halm & Sauer, 2015, 53). Muslim associations tend to have relatively few full-time staff, so the extent of voluntary work is often high and a large part of the services on offer can be regarded as "semi-professional" (Ceylan & Charchira, 2018, 191). In this sense, Muslim organisations are still far from the complex professional structure of professional umbrella organisations such as *Caritas* or *Diakonie*.

However, the largely quantitative data are only of limited value. The statement that a mosque association offers support and counselling services does not say anything about the quality, intensity, or organisational form of these services and therefore demonstrates the necessity for further analysis. It can be observed that Islamic associations provide a large number of different social services, but that in only a very few cases has public recognition or state funding been achieved. In many cases, the beneficiaries are Muslims. As research findings from Great Britain have shown, the opportunity to address religious issues and to be understood within one's own culture are of decisive importance in this context (Warden et al., 2016, 8).

In the context of the large 2015 wave of refugees in Germany, numerous Muslim associations showed significant spontaneous commitment. While relying solely on their own resources and donations, they provided spiritual care, counselling services, language courses, accommodation, food and clothing to refugees (Ceylan & Charchira, 2018, 193–194; Nagel & El-Menouar, 2017). This led to strong public visibility for Muslim organisations as providers of social services (Nagel, 2019, 292). This type of engagement corresponds to similar observations on an international level that working with immigrants and refugees is a typical field of activity for religious welfare organisations (Crisp, 2014, 51–53).

In addition to mosque associations, which provide a wide range of religious and social services, many specialised Muslim social service providers have emerged in recent years. As no systematic survey has been done so far in this field, may it suffice to mention the following examples: the *Begegnungs- und Fortbildungszentrum muslimischer Frauen* (Muslim Women's Meeting and Training Centre) (BFmF), in Cologne, can be considered a model of a highly professional organisation (see the contribution by Schröer and Ürek in this volume). Since 1998, the BFmF has been a member of the *Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband*, which has about 25 Alevi or Muslim member organisations (BAMF, 2015, 132–133). A further example is *Sozialdienst muslimischer Frauen* (SmF) (Social Service for Muslim Women), which has existed since 2017 and provides various consultation and support services for families (SmF, N.d.). Both organisations aim to build up local associations analogous to established welfare organisations, as well as strengthening and

connecting them under the auspices of an umbrella organisation. Muslim welfare service is proving itself to be a dynamic and diverse field.

Legitimation Discourses of Muslim Umbrella Organisations

Existing research has pointed out that it is sometimes difficult to clearly identify legitimation discourses referring to welfare services, when social and religious activities overlap or are strongly intertwined. This also raises the question of the extent to which it makes sense or is possible for the state to support social services closely linked to religious issues (Kortmann, 2019, 443). To illustrate this, the Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG) serves as an example. IGMG originally had an Islamist background, but has since adapted to the context of Germany's secular system. One of IGMG's goals is to train young people to take over positions in the organisation, which is also linked to promoting integration in school and the labour market, as well as to preventing addiction (Rosenow-Williams, 2012, 283–285; Schiffauer, 2008, 83). Not surprisingly, IGMG refers to social work in the context of internal organisational activities mentioning "demand-oriented offers for the target groups of women's, youth and young women's organisations in the education and social work fields" (IGMG, N.d.). Religious and social categories can be seen mixing and overlapping here in different ways. Against this background, the focus is now on two of the largest Muslim umbrella organisations in Germany (Rohe, 2020), which deal differently with the relationship between religious and social services:

The multi-ethnic Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), established in 1994 and comprising 35 organisations (some of which are umbrella organisations themselves), is one of the key interlocutors for the state. In its self-presentation, it strongly emphasises the participation, dialogue and unity of the Muslim community:

> Sharing a common faith and its cultivation lies at the core of our associational activities. We provide spiritual care for Muslims and help them to build up their social institutions within their communities, such as spiritual care in prisons or youth work. Family, women and parent counselling is particularly dear to us. For this reason, we are involved in the establishment and operation of day-care centres or kindergartens and participate in appropriate public committees. In addition to all-round Islamic education and general education, our educational work is also aimed at promoting and training responsible, mature Muslims who are able to take responsibility for themselves. (ZMD, N.d.)

Both religious services, such as spiritual care and religious education, and social work activities in the field of counselling are mentioned in this text. Keywords are "faith" and "community". No religious legitimation is given, and the pragmatic starting point for the organisation's activities is a specific need and the ability of Muslims to care for themselves. This is legitimated by the narrative of the umbrella association, in which supporting local communities is highlighted. However, no reference is made to society or the welfare system.

Among the umbrella organisations, the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DITIB) had initially pushed the institutionalisation of welfare the most. DITIB was established by the Turkish state in 1984 and comprises around 900 local mosque associations (Rosenow-Williams, 2012, 460). Projects in refugee aid played an important role, having already been preceded by projects in interreligious dialogue from 2005 and a counselling hotline project from 2008 (Rosenow-Williams, 2012, 222–226). DITIB created a specific website "DITIB Wohlfahrt" dedicated to welfare issues, which contains a lengthy legitimation of the organisation's commitment. The first sentence can be seen as a kind of guiding principle: "Qur'an teaches us how living together in our society is realisable. As DITIB, we contribute to the shaping of the future of our society and promote peaceful coexistence on the basis of Islamic values." (DITIB, 2015) By referring to universal values such as justice, respect and solidarity, the organisation seeks to show that its Islamic horizon of reference is not in contradiction with German society. The document is structured in six sections: commitment, values, responsibility, inclusion, participation, and respect. Each section starts with a quotation from the Qurʾan or the Sunna and is then followed by a secular interpretation including a list of keywords. On the principle of equality of all human beings, it states: "We see it as our duty to help people in need, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or gender and to stand by them in difficult situations." The document shows a double legitimation discourse, referring to traditional Islamic authority on one hand and to "moral evaluation legitimation (…) based on values" (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 109) on the other. The text does not refer to community values, but to a shared "common morality". The combination of Islamic and secular legitimations corresponds to the public context of welfare work.

Whereas the description of ZMD is strongly community-oriented, the DITIB text succeeds both in satisfying the demands of being a welfare provider and in indicating its own motivational roots. Whether the universal and humanistic approach developed in this document corresponds to the actions of the organisation and its officials is yet another issue, however. Due to its strong political ties with Turkey and a lack of independence (Hintz, 2019, 172), willingness in Germany to cooperate with DITIB is declining and collaboration on the refugee project was suspended in 2016. However, the question remains open as to what extent DITIB member associations or the whole umbrella organisation can emancipate from Turkey and transform itself into an independent civil society organisation.

Islamic Theological Justifications for Universal Welfare

The idea of the welfare system being based on generalised values does not exclude new bodies or approaches, but requires them to gain access to the system's general values on the basis of their own values. This is also a matter of theological legitimations which are not placed in the foreground of umbrella organisation presentations. In Islam a tradition exists – analogous to Christianity and Judaism – of a religiously

motivated welfare service for the poor, based on the God-human relationship (Singer, 2008). A key issue for Islamic service providers within the German welfare system (referred to by DIK and established welfare organisations) is whether it is possible to build up a universal offer for all beneficiaries, including non-Muslims. As the Islamic-theological debate on this issue has so far been limited in Germany (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016, 105; Khalfaoui, 2016, 285–286; von Wensierski, 2016, 538–539), two major voices from international research will be presented to address this question: Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Malaysia), from the field of Islamic legal studies, and Farid Esack (South Africa) from the field of Qurʾanic studies and liberation theology.

Kamali is the author of numerous standard works and is considered as one of the most influential voices in global Islamic debates. The fact that he refers to the economic weakness of Muslim countries (Kamali, 2010, 258) illustrates that his focus is less on Muslim communities in Western contexts. He emphasises the possibility in Islam for a "welfare system for all citizens (...) independent of such considerations as race, colour and creed" (Kamali, 2010, 190). Following Surah 5:2, which speaks of cooperation in good works ("co-operate with one another in good work and righteousness"), Kamali emphasises an open framework for cooperation:

> Cooperation as such is therefore not confined to a strictly religious framework. The address here is also to all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, and all Muslims can join hands in charitable and humanitarian work, indeed in all beneficial work. (Kamali, 2010, 193)

According to Kamali, the focus of assistance is on meeting the requirements of those in need and empowering them to take care of themselves, so that assistance becomes unnecessary (Kamali, 2010, 216). When referring to *zakāt*, Kamali stresses the inclusion of non-Muslims as receivers and emphasises that "no distinction need be made in the offer of help or hospitality to them" (Kamali, 2010, 238).

The Islamic liberation theological approach of Farid Esack starts from a priority option for the oppressed and marginalised (Esack, 1997, 99): "A theology of liberation, for me, is one that works towards freeing religion from social, political and religious structures and ideas based on uncritical obedience." (Esack, 1997, 83) Thus Esack aims for a structural change of society. The "preferential option for the *mustaḍʿafūn* [oppressed]" (Esack, 1997, 99) is not limited to Muslims. This leads to an inter-religious approach, going beyond differences between religions: "we see an unarticulated solidarity with the marginalised and exploited that crosses narrow doctrinal lines" (Esack, 1997, 203). It is not religious boundaries but the social boundaries between the oppressors and the oppressed that separate people. This enables a humanistic and advocacy-based approach to welfare work, as a joint venture on an inter-religious level. As a liberation theological approach it requires tackling social problems in a structural way.

Both authors state that a universal opening of social services for all is possible in principle from a Muslim perspective and legitimate their position by referring to the Qurʾan. Whereas Kamali's approach is mainly textual, Esack's is strongly linked to practical experiences of social movements and an analysis of the situation within society. Kamali's approach could also build a bridge in the German context for

Muslims who are strongly oriented towards normative sources. Esack's position, on the other hand, requires a socio-critical attitude and points in the direction of a social-revolutionary movement. This calls for strong proponents and could cause tension with the cooperative German system, in which welfare organisations are highly dependent on the state and bound to it in loyalty. Meanwhile, Esack's position is being discussed in Germany (Tatari, 2016, 196–220), but not yet in the field of social work. It may contribute to a social-ethical reflection on Muslim legitimations of modern welfare systems, which remains a desideratum.

Conclusion: Perspectives for Islamic Social Work in a Plural Welfare System

The German welfare system has been chosen as an example as religious bodies play a highly institutionalised role in it. At best, the Dutch and Austrian welfare states are comparable, although the inclusion of Muslim welfare providers has so far remained rudimentary in both countries (Hoyer, 2016; Sengers & Noordegraaf, 2013, 263). However, the capacity of the German system to include Muslim organisations and to open spaces for Islamic social work has only begun to take effect. Debate on Muslim welfare activities in Germany within DIK and state-funded refugee aid projects represent the first steps of integration. As quite specific competences in relation to a target group of refugees were required here, support for this domain is unsurprising. The openness of the system towards other welfare activities of Muslim service providers is yet to be negotiated.

As the inclusion of new bodies into the welfare system is disputed, legitimation discourses are becoming even more important (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 111). To summarise, the analyses in the various sections of this chapter have shown that the affirmative genealogy of the German welfare system can be interpreted in different ways. Besides a general rejection of this system and its qualification as outdated (as by the sociologist Karl-Heinz Boeßenecker), there are either more inclusive or more exclusive interpretations. Within the dialogical setting of the German Islam Conference (DIK), the participation and necessary recognition of Muslim welfare services are emphasised. This opening process can be interpreted as the "realisation of historically generated ideals and their unfulfilled potential" (Joas, 2013, 135), in a new situation with its particular challenges. In contrast to this, it remains controversial among established welfare organisations to what extent Muslim efforts should be supported. The two divergent positions within *Caritas*, which professes a strong "value commitment" (Joas, 2013, 178) to "openness" serve as an example of the spectrum of positions. Among Muslim umbrella associations, an example of a more self-referential and community-centred discourse (ZMD) and an example of an open discourse with both a religious and a secular basis were shown (DITIB). While the latter can be understood as fulfilling the requirement of openness, the former can be seen as the confirmation of reservations felt towards Islamic

organisations. Theological arguments still only form a minor part of that discourse within Germany, which is why reference has been made to two voices on an international level, Kamali and Esack. Since as a first step, an adaptation to existing standards of social services is expected, it is less likely that liberation-theological approaches, corresponding to a logic of resistance and non-conformity, will be applied at short notice in the German context.

For this reason, an ambivalence between support provided and adaptations required remains: while on the one hand Islamic social work can find space and be promoted within the plural German welfare system, in the long run this may happen at the price of far-reaching secularisation. The beginning of Islamic social work in Germany could thus at the same time herald its end. Hans Joas' concepts of affirmative genealogy and the generalisation of values provide an interpretation which overcomes the dichotomy between their universal validity and the different religious, as well as secular, legitimations of values. Applying these concepts could help Islamic social work to find its place in the plural welfare system without negating its specific profile.

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Part II
Theological and Ethical Discourse on Islamic Social Work

Islamic Social Ethics, Social Work and the Common Good: Learning from Western Contexts

Dilwar Hussain

Abstract This chapter begins by looking at the changing landscape of social action and engagement, social capital and the role of faith groups and congregations in engaging socially. It then considers the ways in which Muslim communities are beginning to articulate a vision for social engagement based on the ideas of *maṣlaḥa* and *maqāṣid*. As we have seen in other chapters in this volume, these concepts have been regarded by many as an important theological foundation for social and ethical work in the public sphere. This chapter will dwell further on the origins of *maṣlaḥa* and look at different approaches towards it. While acknowledging the value of *maṣlaḥa*, the chapter will also assess some of its limitations and examine approaches that are being articulated by modern Muslim intellectuals to advance more egalitarian and inclusive social ethics. It will then suggest additional ways of grounding concerns around needs, social action and engagement in a way that can reflect a notion of the 'common good' – through the idea of human flourishing which is equated here to the Islamic notion of *iḥsān*, in order to move away from parochial outlooks and develop inclusive, universal visions that could nurture a more sophisticated conversation around our shared values and our shared future in Western contexts.

Keywords *Maṣlaḥa* · *Maqāṣid* · *Iḥsan* · Common good · Social capital · Islamic social ethics · Shared values · Western Muslims

Social Capital through Social Action

In the UK the term 'social work' has specific connotations, where a 'social worker' is seen to be a person that is usually mandated by the state to care for the needs of often vulnerable people in society: for example, children in the care system. In this chapter we will use the term 'social work' to mean social action and activity in an

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engagement for social and charitable good in society, rather than the type of state-supported social care mentioned above. Clearly, this is a very broad field of work that is also undergoing quite significant transformation under pressures of social change.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has had impacts on societies across the world that we are yet to fathom. Recent economic crises have also caused huge disruption in the way social welfare and activity takes place, with the state in Western societies having to cut back in many areas and a growing expectation that civil society, churches and religious congregations will step in. But even before this time, important transformations have been traced. Robert Putnam, in his famous work on social capital, highlights the decline in cooperative public association in American society. And the US doesn't seem to be alone – one can identify such trends in other societies: decline in membership of political parties, decline in church attendance, voter apathy, etc. This is not to argue that public association is in a state of collapse, indeed data from Europe and the US does seem to show different results and part of the 'decline' may actually be a sign of how the nature of association is being transformed as we enter a more globalised, digital age. However, theories around social capital, including the works of prominent sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, in addition to Putnam, put forward a compelling thesis of the importance of relationships and networks in society.

Social capital, as any other form of capital, has the potential to be used positively or negatively. This is further nuanced by the identification of three types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking. Putnam reminds that these can be present in different quantities in any given situation. According to Putnam, "bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging capital provides a sociological WD-40" (Putnam, 2000, 23). Bonding social capital operates within a group, bridging social capital connects groups together and allows them to function harmoniously and linking capital is often seen as the force that networks people or institutions across different levels of society. Very strong bonding social capital may thus be good for the in-group (its internal solidarity) but risks being seen as divisive and isolationist unless balanced by strong bridging and linking social capital.

This brings us to the point of how faith relates to social capital. Vivien Lowndes identifies three different approaches in social capital literature: (1) that religion is irrelevant, (2) that it is detrimental and (3) that it is invaluable to social capital (Lowndes, 2004). Religion most definitely presents an ambivalent input to solidarity and social capital. On the one hand, we have seen fundamentalist and extreme conservative attitudes towards the 'other', the extreme and racist politics of movements such as the Ku Klux Klan, intolerant religious nationalism or the jihadist terrorism of al-Qaeda and ISIS. On the other hand, charitable giving, the foundation of schools and hospitals, various movements aimed at peace and reconciliation and even the inspiration behind state welfare in Europe, all or partly, stem from religious motivations. While some interpretations of Christianity may have played a role in maintaining apartheid, others were important in dismantling it and the Truth and Reconciliation process showed the immense healing potential of Christianity for a highly fragmented society. Examples could also be cited from other faith traditions,

including the particularly well-known Sikh tradition of hospitality of the langar. Putnam's US experience led him to conclude that:

> Faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America (…) as a rough rule of thumb, our evidence shows, nearly half of all associational memberships in America are church related, half of all personal philanthropy is religious in character, and half of all volunteering occurs in a religious context. (Putnam, 2000, 66)

In the UK, the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Life and Faith coined the term 'faithful capital' (CULF, 2006). This was in recognition of the role that communities of faith play, particularly through the language (e. g. hope, mercy, love, forgiveness, hospitality) and practice (e. g. charity, encounter, nurturing) that they bring to the public arena and the contribution this makes to social capital. Baker and Skinner (2006) also talk of 'religious capital', which:

> (…) should not simply be seen as a 'bankable commodity' that can be stored, counted or controlled. Rather it is being continuously created within a society increasingly interested in and shaped by the values of faith and spirituality. The influence of faith on wider society is in some ways an unexpected turn of events – after all, the largely secular social and political fields of thought assumed (along the lines of secularisation theory in the 1960s and 1970s) that religion would cease to have any significant public impact in the 21st century. It is becoming ever more apparent that this is not, in fact, the case. (26)

Because of the congregational nature of religious structures, there seem to be clear motivations for bonding social capital at the very least. However, if we also consider aspects of Christian teaching, around welcoming the stranger and the down-trodden (Bretherton, 2006; Morisy, 2003), it is little surprise that churches play a prominent role in social action – for example, campaigns to welcome refugee groups and asylum seekers. Beyond the impact on social capital through social action, places of worship can also provide a valuable mechanism for generating social solidarity and a sense of the common good. Particularly in larger cities, many religious congregations are increasingly multi-ethnic spaces, and they also provide a potential for interaction across boundaries of class and wealth, and, crucially, across generations.

The main focus of this chapter is to consider how social capital and, more importantly, notions of the common good are applied in the context of Muslim communities. Many mosques demonstrate social capital in the way that congregations are drawn from across varying ages and social backgrounds. Beyond mosques, Muslim community development and other Muslim charitable activities are often organised through a plethora of community organisations that also show this type of cross-linking in the way they work and the voluntary resources they manage to attract in order to sustain activities.

Islam has a strong tradition of social justice, social action and encouragement for people to participate in public life. In addition to its more esoteric and spiritual teachings, the Qurʾan describes one of the roles of believers as people who "encourage the good and discourage the wrong." (Q 3:110)[1] Furthermore, a strong emphasis on community life and mutual support has ensured that notions such as *zakā* (a

[1] All translations of the Qurʾan are the author's own

religious obligation to pay 2.5% of one's wealth in charity) and *ṣadaqa* (voluntary charity) have been popularly upheld among Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad emphasised, "He who is satisfied while his neighbour starves is not a believer" (Al-Albānī: Silsilat, 1995, 149). Such teachings perhaps aimed to create, from the ground up, a community which views social engagement, solidarity, charity – and personal sacrifice for these aims – as religious and human obligations.

A *maqāṣid*-Based Approach and Its Possible Limitations

The notion of public or common good (*maṣlaḥa ʿāmma*) is related to an important concept in Islamic legal thought. The idea of *maṣlaḥa* (benefit or interest) is something we will explore in some detail throughout this chapter to see how it is used by those engaged in social initiatives, as well as by scholars and intellectuals, to provide a framework for thinking, not just about social engagement and action, but about how the purpose of Islam is understood.

In the constellation of Muslim networks in Europe, there is a wide range of organisations ranging from very small informal groups, with very little income, to medium-sized mosques and educational institutions. The vast majority are still quite small organisations but there are a few examples of quite significant infrastructures – mainly relief focused NGOs with an international reach, such as Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid and Penny Appeal (originating in the UK). In 2019, Islamic Relief (the largest of these) raised £130 million from across the world, over 70% of that coming from five western countries (USA, UK, Canada, Sweden and Germany) (Islamic Relief, 2020). Within the work of such organisations, the frameworks of *maṣlaḥa*, and more so, *maqāṣid* (objective, often closely related with *maṣlaḥa*) has begun to emerge as a way of grounding their theory of social engagement within an Islamic paradigm, even if in the context of wider human development and social work objectives.

Islamic Relief cite *maqāṣid* in a range of their publications, for example on human development, saying that, "the understanding of the *maqāṣid* has enabled Islam as a faith to remain contextually relevant and illuminating in each new age and circumstance." (Islamic Relief, 2014a, 13) Similarly, a publication on migrant rights talks of how, "a framework of forced migrant rights would need to reflect the five "purposes" (or *maqaṣid*) of *Sharīʿa* (Islamic law)" (Islamic Relief, 2014b, 12). A publication on forced and early marriages mentions that, "in situations that are not directly addressed in the Qur'an, such as a specific minimum age for marriage, the principle of maṣlaḥa mursala, or 'unrestricted public interest' must apply." (Islamic Relief, 2018, 10) The latter passage is trying to argue for introducing a minimum age for marriage where the scripture is seen to be silent on this. There are numerous examples of other NGOs that have started to frame their visions and programmes around the language of *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥa* in order to ground their work in some form of Islamic social theory of change.

The *maqāṣid-cum-maṣāliḥ* approach discussed by Mohammad Hashim Kamali (1999), among others, has been an important prism for Muslim thinkers to allow, especially for Muslims living in minority contexts, a way for changes in the modern era to speak to their lived experiences of Islam – e. g. *fatāwa* (legal opinions) allowing Muslims to take out interest-bearing loans or mortgages to purchase homes. For the numerous Muslim scholars that endorsed these views, the argument was that something they considered to be prohibited (haram) should be regarded as allowed (halal), based on necessity and the higher priorities of settling, having stability and saving money. We begin to see here a sense of prioritisation of different, often competing, values.

The modern cohort of scholars advocating such an objective (*maqāṣid*) focused outlook is quite broad – from people such as Tahir ibn Ashur (d. 1973), at the more open end of the group, to Said Ramadan al-Bouti (d. 2013) who proposed a more restricted usage and conditions. Scholars such as Jasser Auda and Mohammad Hashim Kamali have used *maqāṣid* as a reformist tool, to open spaces for challenging aspects of contemporary Muslim thought, using legal tools that are recognised by traditional scholars and communities (Auda, 2007, 8).

As the discourse permeates to lay people, many have adopted the *maqāṣid* and *maṣāliḥ* paradigms in an attempt to remain authentically religious and use them, even if in tokenistic ways at times, to navigate their way around the complexities of living an 'Islamic' life in modern settings – whether in the fields of charitable activity, mediation, economics, law, politics, etc. Furthermore, *maqāṣid* is also used as a pseudo-rationalist basis for addressing contemporary problems, as we have seen above.

In searching for the origins of a purposive or objective orientated approach to Islamic practice, one can find examples in the life of Muhammad, his companions and the first generation. We also know from the life of Imam al-Shafi (d. 820) that upon migration he changed his *fatāwa* in recognition of the time and space (contextual) factors of human life, and this has always been a part of Muslim tradition, though perhaps less emphasised in the modern era with the rise of globalisation. Muslim tradition also gave consideration to *ʿurf* (customs of people) in the legal process of some early schools of jurisprudence; however, the term *maqāṣid* was not in use during this era.

According to Kamali it was only in the fourth century of Islam (tenth Century CE), that:

> (…) the term maqaṣid was used in the juristic writings of Abu ʿAbd Allah al-Tirmidhi al-Hakim (d. 320/932) and recurrent references to it appeared in the works of Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni (d. 478/1085) who was probably the first to classify the maqāṣid al-Shariʿa into the three categories of essential, complementary and desirable (daruriyyat, hajiyyat, tahsiniyyat) which has gained general acceptance ever since. (Kamali, 1999, 199)

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), one of the students of al-Juwayni, talks of the:

> Maṣlaḥa, which we are concerned about here, mean[ing] the protection of the objectives of Shariʿa, namely the preservation of religion, life, offspring, reason, and property. Anything

> that furthers these five objectives is maṣlaḥa, and anything that runs contrary to them is mafsada (corruption). (Al-Ghazzali, 2018)

Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi (d. 1210), similar to al-Ghazali, was an early pioneer in the discourse. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) further stated that, "Shariʿa is based on wisdom and consideration of people's interests (*maṣlaḥa*) both in this world and the world to come. It is all about justice, mercy, and welfare." (Al-Jawziyya, 1993).

We can see that these ideas evolved over time. According to Opwis, al-Qarafi (d. 1285) and Al-Tufi (d. 1316) devised alternative models of *maṣlaḥa* that "increased the potential for adapting existing laws to new circumstances over the model of al-Ghazali and al-Razi" (Opwis, 2005, 195). Al-Qarafi added a sixth objective (dignity, *'ird*) to the *maqāṣid* and al-Tufi even argued that a ruling based on *maṣlaḥa* (outside the realm of ritual worship) could be given priority over a ruling based on scripture and that the *maṣlaḥa* could be discernible by human intellect.

Ibn Taymiya (d. 1328) asserted that the objectives could not be confined to a specific number and should rather be an open-ended list of values, and Al-Shatibi (d. 1388) further elaborated the ideas of *maṣlaḥa* in his time, developing it into a more comprehensive framework for legal theory. He also argued for an inductive method (*istiqrāʾ*) to ascertain *maṣāliḥ* from the body of scripture (meaning that this could be attained in the absence of a specific text). In modern times, Ibn Ashur has pushed for the scope of the *maqāṣid* to include the preservation of social order as well as promotion of wellbeing, freedom and righteousness (*ṣalaḥa*) of the community (Ibn Ashur, 2006). Kamali has proposed that freedom of expression, human development and scientific research and development be added (Kamali, 1999), Khalid Abou el Fadl has argued for individual and human rights (El Fadl, 2003), as have others also made their contributions.

In reality there are therefore multiple approaches to the study of *maṣāliḥ*, and multiple schools of *maqāṣid*, and this complexity and debate is often lost as the discourse gets translated to grassroots communities, welfare and charitable organisations. From the examples we have seen above, the promotion and uptake is all too often of the earlier conceptions of *maṣlaḥa* with a more conservative focus, articulating the preservation of the five essential elements (religion, life, intellect, lineage and property) of Shariʿa as its hierarchical 'objectives' (*maqāṣid*) in a somewhat simplified public discourse. The discourse of al-Tufi, al-Shatibi and Ibn Ashur gets lost in transmission. An example of this is that Said Ramadan al-Bouti, based in Syria, was able to argue that women should not enter the workplace alongside men. His reasoning was that the need to earn an income, which would resonate with the objective around preservation of property, is trumped (in his view) by the potential harm of interaction between men and women, undermining the objective of preserving family and progeny.

The *maqāṣid* based approach – designed to remind the jurist of the purpose of any given ruling and offer a sense of priority – has been used by some scholars to open up interpretive spaces in the process of deducing *fiqh* (law), and the application of Shariʿa, while maintaining a strong connection with tradition. However, some critics of the *maqāṣid* approach see this as too liberal, whilst others view it as

too restricted in its ability to address issues and hence too conservative, as the defining framework is still one that gives primacy to a legal approach to addressing human problems, as opposed to more widespread ethical (and other) considerations. What makes this even more difficult is that in the current time, *fiqh* has attained a sense of rigidity in the lay and public discourse due to its association with being 'God's law', neglecting the idea that *fiqh* has always been a human interpretation and application of the law. The project of promoting the *maqāṣid* has arguably been an important endeavour that was, and remains, needed in the absence of other, more rigorous tools for ethical approaches to Islamic practice.

The original caution, as the ideas of *maqāṣid* were being initially articulated, probably came out of a desire to stress religious certainty over ambiguity and human subjectivity at a time when intense debates were occurring in the Muslim world around the use of reason: for example, the argumentation between the Ash'ari and Mu'tazili schools of *ʿaqida* (creed). Early Islamic philosophy was heavily indebted to Greek foundations and tools and was thus profoundly influenced by it. The prolific activities of Muslim philosophers was initially very influential on Islamic thought across the board and one of the preoccupations of the theologians was thus to 'protect' the distinctive nature of Islamic thought and root its evolution in the certainty, comfort and familiarity of the 'divine scripture'. Yet even a very cursory assessment of the discipline of *maṣlaḥa* shows that in reality the new sets of terms did little to remove human subjectivity as they arose over the centuries, from those premodern times into the modern era. Notions such as 'good', 'public interest', 'universal, 'purpose', even 'justice' are highly subjective and require constant definition and interpretation. This is why it is entirely possible to argue both conservatively and liberally for a range of issues around gender equality, human rights and sexual orientation using a *maqāṣid-cum-maṣāliḥ* based approach. It should be stressed that such ambiguity is not in itself a bad thing, in fact it is one of the strengths of the discipline, but we need to be clear that the presumption that this removes reasoning (and therefore supposed arbitrary human judgement) and introduces a sense of religious certainty (and therefore supposed authenticity) is based on arguable foundations.

Going beyond this, I believe there is a key problem in the 'DNA' of the *maqāṣid* discourse – the expression of the *maqāṣid* is not from revelation per se but is derived from the *ḥadd* punishments in early Islam. When al-Ghazali and other early scholars were seeking the objectives of the Shariʿa, which are not simply and categorically laid out in the text, they looked for the strongest signals in the text for the boundaries of Islam, and what better place to look than the things that were categorically prohibited – murder, adultery, theft, slander, abandonment of one's intellectual faculties by use of intoxicants, apostasy, etc. The *ḥadd* is the limit and early scholars looked at the harshest punishments and deducted from there what they saw to be five key objectives of the Shariʿa – preservation of life, religion, intellect, progeny, property. That would seem fair as an intellectual exercise to ascertain the limits of Islam, but the problem lies in the way that *maqāṣid* were then used in a more generalised manner to try to inspire Muslim behaviour. These five objectives, and others as they were added, were originally about preserving and protecting; so, by definition, they were

designed to limit behaviour, to set the boundaries. Crucially, they are not based on a vision of what people should do, rather what they should not do.

As we have seen above, there are, and were, different approaches to *maṣlaḥa* and Jasser Auda, one of the contemporary thought leaders in the field of *maqāṣid* studies, speaks eloquently of how there is a transformation that is taking place in modern scholarship from an emphasis on 'protection' and 'preservation' to 'development' and 'rights' (Auda, 2007, 21). This is an important observation and marks a point to watch in terms of future development and stratification of the discipline. In order for this to be realised we need to emphasise, that there are distinct 'schools' or approaches to *maqāṣid-cum-maṣāliḥ*. Johnston (2007) identifies at least three different *maqāṣid* based approaches (in the context of human rights discourse): traditionalists, progressive conservatives and progressive post-modernists. Thus, the discourse is not of a singular approach as is often perceived at the level of grassroots organisations and activists. Once this vista is opened, people can then opt to choose one approach over another, in keeping with their aspirations and ambitions.

Another problem that Muslims need to address is the gross underdevelopment of thought in such areas, when trying to look back and use existing and established paradigms that are recognised, familiar and therefore seen as 'authentic'. The tools may well be valid ones, but if they are not suitable nor appropriate for the job, then they will not yield the perceived benefit. While Islam does have a firm notion of *fiqh* (law) and Shariʿa, not every situation is a legal one that demands a legal response, particularly when we are thinking about social work and action. Thus, rather than abdicate responsibility to a scholar to provide 'a fatwa', citizens need to be empowered to think for themselves and find their own answers to their specific realities, for which they may well have more intimate knowledge than a 'scholar' who is distant to the issue – often distant even in physical terms, living thousands of miles away. Soon after the formative period of Islam, as the intellectual tradition began to settle, the codification of the legal corpus came to dominate Islamic disciplines. Over time the philosophical and ethical branches of knowledge became less emphasised and, in some contexts, devalued entirely.

A revival of these branches of knowledge is thus an imperative in order to rebalance the 'legalistic outlook' that currently dominates Muslim thinking. These are clearly huge challenges that will not be resolved quickly or easily. Still, this is a task to which many intellectuals have already been addressing their energies.

From a Parochialist View towards a Common and Shared Vision of Society

Having looked at the origins of *maqāṣid* based discourse, let us briefly mention some of the ways contemporary Muslim scholarship has tried to develop a shared vision of the public good. An interesting approach to circumvent excessive legalism and literalism is found in the works of a range of different thinkers who, over the last century, have been at pains to emphasise the *tawḥīdic* integrity of the Qurʾan – i. e.

that the Qur'an must be read as a whole for it to be really understood, and that a piecemeal approach to using a single verse (or even a small cluster of verses) to derive a law departs from the ethos of the tradition. One can hear echoes of al-Shatibi in this. Examples of such individuals include Hamiduddin Farahi (d. 1930), Nasr Abu Zayd (d. 2010), Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), Riffat Hassan and Amina Wadud.

Rahman (1984) presented a particularly interesting tool for deriving the ethical principles that one should work with. His double movement theory of hermeneutics involves looking at the text to take into account the social specificities at the time of early Islam and to extract general ethical principles from those. One can then apply the derived general principles to a given situation today, again taking into account the social conditions (of our time), to reach new specific responses. This is a way of bridging the contextual distance between 'then' and 'now'. Most of these thinkers, particularly Rahman and Abu Zayd emphasised the role of reason in modern interpretation. To continue an example for comparison, this approach may say that the relatively small amounts of interest charged by (most) mortgage lenders (in an economic environment where inflation is a reality) does not actually constitute usury (*ribā*) in the way that the Qur'an defines the term – something linked to severe exploitation of the weak and even bondage of people, were they to default on a loan – so there is no need for a discussion of whether a mortgage is allowed or prohibited. Without understanding the deeper ethical considerations of both ancient times and our time one cannot simply transfer rulings from one society to another, one time to another, without critical analysis.

Muslim intellectuals who advocate for such an outlook of 'reform and renewal' (*iṣlāḥ wa tajdīd*), which is often rooted in a concern for human rights and a serious consideration of tradition, are thus keen to emphasise that "the commitment to human rights does not signify a lack of commitment to God but is instead a necessary part of celebrating human diversity, honouring God's vicegerents, achieving mercy, and pursuing the ultimate goal of justice." (El Fadl, 2003) An important arena of development amongst reformers is the growing body of Islamic feminist critique of patriarchy in Muslim history. These scholars have argued for a rereading of Islamic sources to create a more equal understanding of gender roles in Islam. Wadud, for example, argues that while Muslims have conventionally rejected priesthood, in the name of eradicating any barriers between humanity and God, the default position is that men have often become an intermediary between God and women. It is only by rebalancing this relationship so that men and women have equal access to God, that a true and deep sense of *tawḥīd* (monotheism) can be really envisioned and practiced (Wadud, 1999). In a similar vein, see Mernissi (1992), Mir-Hosseini (2000), Hassan (2001) and Barlas (2002).

The Musawah (Equality) movement, which began in Malaysia, is an example of a very practical initiative, led by female academics and activists, that was inspired by such ideas and aims to bring about reforms in Muslim family laws and the social space. Where traditional thinkers see mainly the mandates and limits set by the text, reformist thinkers tend to see the text as indicating a direction of travel – a hermeneutic trajectory – that is to be unpacked, honed and developed by every generation

in an exciting project of discovery, using our own mature sense of the context as well as the ethical principles and values of Islam in doing this. This is the only way in which we can truly speak of revelation as having deep relevance for the future, as otherwise its value is mainly historical. Such an approach led Abdolkarim Soroush (Soroush, 2000) and Abdullahi an-Naʿim (An-Naʿim, 1990), for example, to argue that the Human Rights paradigm represents a reservoir of human wisdom that the Shariʿa needs to take into consideration, if it is to speak seriously to the human condition of our time.

Going back to the concerns of the early theologians, perhaps our time calls for a recognition that ambiguity and subjectivity are strengths to be embraced, not eliminated – ultimately Muslims have to ask: is the Qurʾanic narrative creating a detailed prescription, a blueprint, for human life or is it proposing a framework for how we may want to think about life and our place in the universe and inviting us to interpret how this can be best actualised for each time and place?

A significant set of questions therefore, to be embraced rather than side-stepped, is about the use of reason and how human reason should work in the presence of something that is understood to be revelation. For without reason we cannot even come to the conclusion that reason is not to be used, thus creating a self-defeating argument! We also need to emphasise that *fiqh* is not divine law, it is man-made, as it is the endeavour of the scholarly mind (usually male) to find solutions to human situations and challenges through the application of what is understood to be divine guidance and principles. Thus, while the Qurʾan and Sunnah may be perceived to be divine in origin, the Shariʿa is a mixture of divine elements reformulated through human understanding and the *fiqh* is even more invested with human effort. Once we unburden ourselves from the anxiety of carrying the weight of divine principles and certainty, the scholarly endeavour can then move with its humanity as the driving force.

In his work on humanism and Islam, Ebrahim Moosa (2011) discusses the role of critical Muslim thinkers and scholars in learning from a wide range of sources. It was because they were open to learning from the Graeco-Roman, Persian, Indian, Chinese and other sources of knowledge that the translation movement at the time of the Abbasid 'House of Wisdom' (Bayt al-Hikma) was able to be so creative. This era led to a vast step-up in Islamic thought that had an impact on a wide range of scholarly disciplines including philosophy, science, mathematics, art and literature. Above all, one sees the tremendous role that reason played in Muslim thought at that time, paving the way for influencing European thought.

As we can see, the use of reason is not simply a matter of the impact of modernity on Islam. Some ancient Muslim thinkers advanced the idea that there are two forms of revelation – the type that one can read as the 'word of God' (scripture), and the type that one can 'read' from the natural world all around us. The epistemological work of Ibn Sina (d. 1037) on the latter influenced the Andalusian Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185), who borrowed from Ibn Sina and wrote his own version of a fictional work, Hayy ibn Yaqdhan, which tells the story of a boy that grew up on a remote island without human contact and how he came to develop knowledge of the truth (of God) through reason and observation alone. This work was translated into Latin by Edward Pococke in 1671 (under the title, *Philosophus Autodidactus*) and then into

English by Simon Ockley in 1708 (entitled The Improvement of Human Reason). The text had a profound impact on, for example, Locke (d. 1704) who was a student of Pococke and his ideas around the tabula rasa, as well as on the theories of empiricism that developed in Western thought.

If we go back even further into the origins of Islam, we can get a glimpse into some of the ways Islam could be framed as having a more inclusive and universalist outlook. A vivid example that is often cited is in the pact known as Hilf al-Fudul ('the virtuous pact'). In his youth, Muhammad was party to a coalition that stood up to support a Yemeni trader who, without tribal protection in Makkah, was defenceless and faced injustice. Later on in life, Muhammad is reported to have described how he was still bound by the pact and that he would not exchange his role in it for any material gain (Lings, 1991). This incident shows clearly how Muhammad was keen to take a stand against the injustices in his society for a cause that did not affect one of his 'own', but another human being whom he did not even know.

We can also find many examples of how Muhammad himself benefited from the support of other people, or was prepared to work with them, regardless of their religious or moral backgrounds. When a small band of his followers in Makkah faced severe treatment at the hands of the Quraish, it was to the Christian Negus of Abyssinia, Ashama bin Abjar, that the Prophet sent those who were able to leave. When Muhammad was secretly leaving Makkah for Medina at the time of the migration (Hijra), it was a non-Muslim guide, Abdallah ibn Urayqit, that he trusted to show the way. During the time of famine in Makkah, when the Muslims were placed under strict sanctions, it was Mutim bin Adiy, who had not embraced the faith of Islam, who would secretly smuggle food to the Muslims and who was instrumental in bringing the boycott to an end. It was also the same Mutim who granted the Prophet protection after the death of his uncle, Abu Talib. It was Waraqah ibn Naufal, a Christian monk and cousin of Khadija (wife of Muhammad) who first explained the nature of revelation to them both, effectively becoming the first to practice exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the Qurʾan. One could argue that without such intimate trust, support and collaboration, Islam would never have survived as a religion.

After Hijra, Muslim, pagan and Jewish tribes came together as a single *umma* (community) asserting that "Conditions must be fair and equitable to all (…). The Jews of Banu Auf are one *umma* with the believers (Muslims) (…)." (Mithaq ul-Madinah, the Pact of Medina) Yet the common discourse today amongst Muslims is to view the word *umma* as an exclusively Muslim notion, in an almost tribal manner. A similar sentiment was used by Mawlana Hussain Ahmed Madani of the Deoband movement in the early twentieth century, when he argued against the division of India and suggested that as long as the rights of Muslims were secure, it would be preferable that they reside in harmony with Hindus as a single nation, sharing a single patriotic tie of nationhood. In 1938 he authored the famous Urdu tract, Mutahidah Qaumiyat aur Islam (translated as 'Composite Nationalism and Islam'), to explain this.

A close look at the teachings of Islam reveals that the normative basis of human relations is meant to be a universal appeal to peace, cooperation and mutual learning: "O people, We have created you from male and female and made you nations

and tribes that you may come to know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God is Knowing and Aware." (Q 49:13) Yet the risk is that in the pursuit of a specific 'Islamic' framework for social actions, Muslim activists and institutions may be inadvertently closing themselves into a highly parochialist view and thus diluting this important universal aspect of Islam. This would in turn mean that a pursuit of the 'common good' is rendered into an exercise in public relations at best, or a competition at worst, rather than a genuine cooperation towards a common and shared vision of society.

Human Needs and Beyond

To seek the common good, we need a vision that looks forward to the horizon and aims far beyond a sense of 'protection' and 'preservation'; to go beyond the notions of existence and survival and ask what we need to flourish and thrive? Abraham Maslow's (d. 1970) hierarchy of needs (Tosi et al., 2000) for human motivation give us some useful insights into some of the complex needs and challenges that face human beings. Though normally used in corporate settings, it may help to describe the needs of groups, communities and populations on a priority basis and thus allow the community to chart out an issue-based agenda for its future development. According to Maslow the following levels of needs motivate people:

1. Physiological: hunger, thirst, bodily needs, etc.
2. Safety/security: self-protection, shelter, order.
3. Belonging and Love: affiliation with others, being accepted.
4. Esteem: to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition.
5. Cognitive: to know, to understand, and explore.
6. Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty.
7. Self-actualisation: to find self-fulfilment and realise one's potential.
8. Transcendence: to help others find self-fulfilment and realise their potential.

The first four are called deficiency needs and the second four are identified as growth needs. As this is a hierarchy, it is suggested that the growth needs are not felt to be important or applicable until the deficiency needs are met (at least partially). Maslow initially listed five needs then later subdivided some to form the final list. I have suggested in the past how there are interesting parallels between such a way of thinking about human needs and Islamic frames of reference. Auda (2007) also draws a parallel between Maslow's scheme of needs and the discourse elaborated by al-Shatibi in his work.

Maslow's eight steps represent an important and interesting way for us to consider how human needs evolve, beginning with the fundamental requirements of life and ending in self-actualisation and transcendence. A classical approach to *maṣlaḥa* could map onto this *dharuriyyāt* (necessities), leading to *hājiyyāt* (needs), leading to *taḥsiniyyāt* (embellishments), but actually this would not be quite accurate because the order deployed by Maslow does not work in the same way (diminishing

in importance). Rather, this leads me to the point below, discussing how we can develop a more aspirational vision in order to fulfil the potential of human beings.

If we started with a blank slate today and asked, "What do we want to see in terms of values and ethics in our modern cosmopolitan environments?", we may suggest notions such as life, love, happiness and wellbeing, fraternity, care for the environment, freedom, opportunity and prosperity, equality, etc. These are similar to the *maqāṣid* in some ways depending on which approach you take, but also quite significantly different. Furthermore, if we are to think about how we elevate our vision for social work and action from one of 'community services' to the 'common good', I would suggest that in addition to any considerations around *maqāṣid-cum-maṣāliḥ,* we also look at human flourishing – what is the basis of human flourishing, how do we reach our potentials and help others to reach theirs? This can be related quite neatly to the Islamic notion of *iḥsān* (excellence) in the context of the social sphere. *Iḥsān* is referred to in a number of scriptural sources, including the famous 'Hadith of Gabriel' and is embraced by Muslims universally. It is also important to point out that the task of those engaged in social action is not the same as the scholars' who are expected to derive fatwa or perform ijtihad, and thus a legal construct is not required for work that is ethical and social in its nature.

The pursuit of those engaged in social work is to tangibly benefit those around them and this cannot be done without finding some element of common ground and common purpose. *Al-maʿrūf* (good, or common good) as suggested in Kurnaz's contribution in this volume would be a valuable basis to seek common ground, especially as the term implies the things that are customarily and widely accepted by a society, and thus helps to root things in our contexts. As we saw earlier, an important teaching in Islam is the encouragement of good (*maʿrūf*) and the discouragement of wrong (*munkar*) (Q 3:104; and a number of other places). *Munkar* is the opposite of *maʿrūf* and means that which is commonly rejected – a point that becomes more relevant below. I would also add to this – the aforementioned notion of *ṣadaqa* (charity). Charity goes beyond the idea of human need or fixing a deficiency in society. The Qurʾanic view of charity is that we perform it for our own spiritual benefit – "we feed you only for the face of God, we do not seek reward or thanks from you (…)." (Q 76:9) Charity is also shown to neighbours and fellow humans regardless of faith. If we look to *zakā* (as a form of charity), although more specific than *ṣadaqa*, one of the allowed purposes for dispensing zakat is *taʾlīf al-qulūb* (bringing hearts together) (Q 9:60); we may say 'reconciliation' in our modern terminology. And finally, we could also add *ʿadl* (justice), which often goes alongside *iḥsān* (excellence) in Islamic discourse, and how this nurtures a vision of confronting social ills. Ibn Ibn Taymiya (1991) famously said, "God upholds the just state even if it disbelieves, but does not uphold the unjust state even if it believes." Alluding to the idea that justice sits at a macro level above religious specificity and wins the pleasure and support of God (over faith which is steeped in injustice).

Combined – *ʿadl*, *iḥsān*, *maʿrūf* and *ṣadaqa* – these could help to create a vision of Islamic social ethics and allow for social work and social action to be framed beyond parochial and communitarian needs and give those involved in such work an aspiration for the common good. It is important to note that the definitions of *munkar*

and *maʿrūf* are not tightly or exhaustively specified by the Qurʾan or the Sunnah. They thus remain subjective and open to interpretation and evolving consensus in any given society. This is important for a time when there is so much debate (often quite heated) around 'the values of Islam' and how compatible or incompatible they may be with 'Western values'. Without essentialising either, the point is that a gradual, consensual approach to thinking about what constitutes *maʿrūf* and *munkar* in our modern times could be immensely helpful in evolving new ideas and framings of Islam around important elements of contemporary debate such as equality, freedom, liberty, human rights. Perhaps this could be one tool, for Muslims, for reaching new settlements and common agreement in Western settings around our shared values, if we can find mechanisms for having the discussion in a mature, mutually respectful and inclusive framework.

Conclusion

We have considered the way in which *maṣlaḥa* and *maqāṣid* have emerged in Muslim discourse and the important mechanism and means they have provided for an object-orientated way to think about Islam. The basic purpose of this would be to help the jurist to seek the *ratio legis* and not to apply or derive judgements from scripture in a literal manner. However, there are (perhaps unavoidable) tensions inherent in this project, due to the origins of *maṣlaḥa* (being derived from the *ḥadd*) as well as the desire of early theologians and *fuqahāʾ* to 'protect' the branches of Islamic learning from excessive influence of rationalist and Greek thought, by attempting to remove some of the elements of human subjectivity and reason in the process of working with tools such as *maṣlaḥa*. However, we have tried to show that the science of *maqāṣid* evolved with time and different approaches to it arose; furthermore, the removal of some elements of subjectivity was merely substituted by others.

While *maqāṣid-cum-maṣāliḥ* have been invaluable tools for some Muslim scholars of *uṣūl* (principles) of *fiqh* to open up spaces of debate, bring subtle changes, argue for reform, and generally allow Muslims to root their practices more contextually, it may not be the right tool in every situation and cannot be seen as a panacea for the Muslim condition. It definitely is not a substitute for the huge intellectual endeavour of nurturing critical thinking, revitalising the spirit of Islam and the Shariʿa and allowing them to engage more profoundly and meaningfully with the modern world and the diverse contexts that Muslims find themselves in today. Thus, constructing Muslim social work along the framework of *maqāṣid* should be done with its inherent limitations in mind – the chief among these being that a paradigm originally designed to protect the limits of Shariʿa is perhaps not the most optimal tool to propel people towards an aspirational vision, especially if they are operating in a multi-faith, secular context. Furthermore, the construct comes from the

discipline of law and thus (naturally) its tendency is to nurture a legal approach to what is in actual fact a set of circumstances more rooted in ethical and social bases.

As we saw, the issue of social capital is an important consideration when looking at the way that communities and societies develop macro and micro level interaction. As Muslim communities settle in European, American and other Western contexts and their basic survival needs, according to Maslow's hierarchy, are slowly met so that they can gradually turn their vision to higher purposes in thinking about making contributions to the common good, aspiring to work for the whole of society rather than their parochial interest, it is important to find the right basis to construct this on. Alternative frameworks beyond the law (*fiqh*) need to be used for social action and welfare purposes. Bearing this in mind, we have suggested that constructing new outlooks utilising the notions of justice (*ʿadl*), human flourishing (*iḥsān*), common good (*maʿrūf*) and charity (*ṣadaqa*) could create a more inclusive and appropriate vision for the future. These are ideas that are deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition and seem well suited to be aspirational needs of social work for the common good. But far beyond this, they could potentially help us to have the type of constructive conversation, that is currently lacking, of how we arrive at new Islamic social ethics and develop a consensus around shared values as Muslim citizens settle in different parts of the West. In this way, the presence of Muslims in Western settings, as difficult as it may seem to some, could actually present an important opportunity for learning about new ways of understanding Islam as it is applied and interpreted afresh.

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The *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* Approach as Theological Basis for Islamic Social Work: A Critical Analysis and an Alternative Proposal

Serdar Kurnaz

Abstract Since social work protects the interests and benefits of people, one of the first conceptual terms which might guarantee the theological foundation of Islamic social work is *maṣlaḥa*. In modern times, *maṣlaḥa* is used interchangeably with the overall objectives (*maqāṣid*) of Sharʿia. The use of *maṣlaḥa* in its broader sense of *maqāṣid* enables scholars to link their understanding of social work to the Islamic tradition of sciences, especially to Islamic legal thinking. However, if we look back at the Islamic tradition of legal thinking, we discover a totally different approach to *maṣlaḥa* and especially *maqāṣid*: it becomes a source of knowledge, whereas in the tradition of the classical *ʾuṣūl*, it was a tool for legal hermeneutics. Although the search for the theological foundation of Islamic social work in the realm of Islamic legal theory and Islamic law is comprehensible, the lack of critical reflection on the discrepancy of the modern understanding of *maṣlaḥa* and *maqāṣid*, in contrast to the classical understanding, leads to theological dead ends and contradictions. Some scholars have already drawn attention to this but have remained vague concerning a solution to this specific problem. This paper will highlight and compare the specifics of the classical approach of *maṣlaḥa* in classical Islamic legal thinking and the modern *maqāṣid* approach. Additionally, I will highlight the Qurʾanic concept of *maʿrūf* in the three-fold division of K. Reinhart, and reflect on it as a possible theological basis for modern Islamic social work attempts.

Keywords Islamic social work · Objectives of the Sharʿia · Public interest · *Maṣlaḥa* · *Maqāṣid* · *Maʿrūf*

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Introduction

As far as Islamic social work is concerned, there is a need for it to have an Islamic theological foundation. Since social work protects the interests and benefits of people, one of the first conceptual terms which might guarantee the theological foundation of Islamic social work is *maṣlaḥa*. *Maṣlaḥa* seems to be the common link between various understandings of Islamic social work and their core concept. In modern times, *maṣlaḥa* is used interchangeably with the overall objectives of Sharʿia, e. g. the *maqāṣid*. The use of *maṣlaḥa* in its broader sense of *maqāṣid* – which is also called *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* approach – enables scholars to link their understanding of social work to the Islamic tradition of sciences, especially to Islamic legal thinking. However, if we look back at the Islamic tradition of legal thinking, we discover a totally different approach to *maṣlaḥa* and especially *maqāṣid*, because of a particular understanding of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and epistemology. In modern times, *maqāṣid* has become a source of knowledge, whereas in the tradition of the classical *ʾuṣūl*, it was a tool for legal hermeneutics. That said, although the search for a theological foundation for Islamic social work in the realm of Islamic legal theory (*ʾuṣūl al-fiqh*) and Islamic law is comprehensible, a lack of critical reflection on the discrepancy between the modern understanding of *maṣlaḥa* and *maqāṣid*, in contrast to the classical understanding between the fifth/eleventh and eighth/fourteenth century, leads to theological dead ends and contradictions, to which some scholars drew attention, but remained vague concerning the solution to this specific problem. This paper will highlight and compare the specifics of the classical approach of *maṣlaḥa* in classical Islamic legal thinking and the modern *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* approach. Additionally, I will highlight the Qurʾanic concept of *maʿrūf* in the three-fold division of K. Reinhart and the "need-centred" approach of M. Bassiouni, to reflect on it as a possible theological basis for modern social work attempts.

Maṣlaḥa as Theological Basis for Islamic Social Work?

Classical Maṣlaḥa: A Brief Outline

Contemporary scholars, irrespective of their research field, concentrate specifically on the classical term *maṣlaḥa*, which can roughly be translated as interest of and benefit for people. Thus, every ruling in the realm of Islamic law secures an interest for humans or avoids anything harmful, which is called *mafsada* in Arabic. Briefly, since in Muslim tradition the field of Islamic law was (and in my view, still is) the realm of reflection on human actions in general, scholars discussed which needs should be protected within that realm. In this way, theological and methodological grounds for concepts which secure people's needs are placed in a legal theoretical framework, the so-called *ʾuṣūl al-fiqh*. This is also the case for *maṣlaḥa*. The starting

point for the evolution of the term *maṣlaḥa* is the notion that not everything in the Qurʾan and Sunna gives an answer on whether an action is religiously valid or not. In addition, the use of analogy is limited to cases mentioned in the Qurʾan and Sunna. With the evolution of Islamic law, the need for a technique which covers cases that are not overtly mentioned in the sources arose. The first technique, highly disputed in the beginning but subsequently broadly accepted by Sunni Muslims, was that of analogy. The reason behind this was the semi-victory of the so-called traditionalists' epistemology,[1] which forced the rationalists to limit their methods to avoid contradictions with religious, textual sources. Hence rationalistic methods could only be used by scholars when the sources were silent on a case and analogy was not applicable. Analogy, on the other hand, is a method which enables scholars to link a legal question directly to the sources and to find solutions. For example, the Qurʾan is silent on the consumption of whisky, but we know that the consumption of wine is prohibited according to Q 5:90. Both of these actions have the same *ratio legis:* to be drunk. Since whiskey – like wine – has the capacity to make someone drunk, its consumption is also prohibited. Such cases of analogy, however, are rare. Analogy was therefore not nor could it be *the* solution to new legal and ethical problems. Nevertheless, analogical reasoning gained acceptance in Sunni circles at least from the third century after the Hijra onwards. Before that, Muslim jurists more often took into account human experience and local traditions in solving legal problems. We will return to this point subsequently, during the discussion of the term *al-maʿrūf*. The above-mentioned epistemology – consulting textual sources in each case as far as possible – forced scholars to find hermeneutical tools to solve problems according to the wording of the Qurʾan and Sunna, even if there was no direct link to them. Particularly from the fifth/eleventh century onwards, *maṣlaḥa*-scholars concentrated on the term *maṣlaḥa* – a *terminus ad quem* for its technical use – to find the hermeneutical tool, as mentioned, which fitted into their epistemology.

Obviously, it is impossible to describe the classical *maṣāliḥ* (sing. *maṣlaḥa*) approach in all its details, because most *ʾuṣūl*-scholars have differing methods concerning the use of *maṣlaḥa* to solve legal problems (Opwis, 2010; for a brief description of the evolution see Kurnaz, 2014, 85–149). Nevertheless, there is a common ground on which most scholars rely: the following classification of *maṣāliḥ*, which can be traced back to al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and, following him, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) (Kurnaz, 2014, 88–91). Since al-Ghazālī's approach is more common to the scientific community, more systematic, and because it has been influential for many scholars, I will summarise his classification of *maṣlaḥa.* This can form the basis for a valid derivation of a ruling, to clarify the validity of an act.

1. Accepted interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-muʿtabara*): these are interests which are accepted either by the Qurʾan and/or Sunna, such as the protection of wealth through the punishment of theft.

[1] Although Hallaq speaks about a "Great Synthesis" and not a victory, it seems to me, and also for him, if it was a victory of the traditionalists, because rationalist methods were limited according to the traditionalists' approach to always go back to the sources (Hallaq, 2005, 124–125).

2. Invalid interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-mulghā*): these are interests which are, according to the Qurʾan and Sunna, invalid; although humans see some benefits in them, such as the idea of equal distribution of inheritance, since the Qurʾan says that in some instances daughters get half the amount sons inherit.
3. Unattested interests (*al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala*): neither the Qurʾan nor Sunna provide direct information on the validity of a certain *maṣlaḥa*, thus it is unattested through the authoritative sources. Scholars then have to elaborate which of those *maṣāliḥ* – the most frequent in daily life – can be regarded as acceptable interests and are thus theologically justified as the basis of an action.

Al-Ghazālī especially systematised the realm of unattested interests, which was an urgent need since the Qurʾan and Sunna were silent on them. It is important to keep in mind that this 'urgency' only existed because the traditionalist epistemology forced scholars back to the sources, since they are, according to their own understanding, not able to grasp good and bad without referring to these religious sources. This very epistemology states that humans are unable to grasp good and bad without the information in the textual sources, since good and bad do not exist as such. Only a minor group of Sunni scholars states that humans do have the ability to grasp good and bad, but they have to ensure themselves through verifying with Qurʾanic and Sunnaic information. Thus, al-Ghazālī was forced to classify unattested interests so as not to contradict the Qurʾan and Sunna. According to him, *maṣlaḥa* falls into three different categories: necessities (*ḍarūriyyāt*), needs (*ḥājiyyāt*), and improvements (*taḥsīniyyāt*). While scholars did not define needs and improvements – they only described them as interests to consider, otherwise society could be harmed, but would still exist – necessities are defined very strictly: necessities are interests which should be protected, otherwise society cannot exist, and not only Muslim society. Necessities, again, consist of five elements: the protection of (1) life, (2) reason, (3) religion, (4) descendance and (5) wealth. Al-Ghazālī did not choose these categories arbitrarily, quite the reverse. He directly derived them from punishments (*ḥudūd*), mentioned in the Qurʾan and Sunna, such as the punishment for murder (Q 4:92–93), for drunkenness (Q 5:90–91), for changing religion (for which there is no Qurʾanic source, only mentions in Hadith!), for adultery (Q 24:2), and theft (Q 5:38). The reasoning behind this is that al-Ghazālī concentrates on punishments to be sure that Qurʾan and Sunna directly protect the above-mentioned interests; it is not for him to say which interests should necessarily be protected. He can therefore argue that he did not invent these categories, but rather the Qurʾan did: this line of argumentation fits with the above-mentioned traditionalist epistemology.

Although, if we follow al-Ghazālī, the Qurʾan indirectly refers to all of the five necessities, which are not transparent in their meaning: we cannot be sure what is really meant by the protection of religion and reason, for example. On the other hand, for example, why should the punishment for drinking alcohol indicate one of the subordinate goals of Islamic law, the protection of reason? It could also be a means to ensure humans act responsibly or to protect from criminal incapacity. Furthermore, the greater reason behind it is not clear: is it the ability to think critically, for mental health, or common sense? (Bassiouni, 2014, 192).

Most scholars state that they have to at least consider the necessities to find solutions to problems in daily life. Others, like Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), go further, saying that every *maṣlaḥa* should be considered as long as it does not directly contradict the wording of authoritative sources. The only exception to classical epistemology seems to be the Ḥanbalī scholar Najm ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316), whose theory is, incidentally, not as radical as it may seem. The use of the *maṣāliḥ* on the other hand is complex, like *qiyās al-munāsaba*, in short, it is a process of analogical reasoning by considering a person's interest, which suits the overall objectives of the Sharʿia. This type of reasoning, however, will not be discussed in detail here (Opwis, 2010).

Contemporary Maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa Approach

In contemporary studies, as Opwis already pointed out, scholars decided to develop *maṣāliḥ* as an independent source of law and called them more often *maqāṣid*:

> What they all have in common despite their variety, and what distinguishes them from pre-modern authors, is their focus on the *maqāṣid* instead of *maṣlaḥa*. In the pre-modern period, most jurists focused on *maṣlaḥa* as a tool to derive legal rulings and as a criterion or standard by which to judge the correctness of rulings. (Opwis, 2017, 16)

Here is a brief outline of this approach: every solution which is derived from sources should consider the *maqāṣid* or, at least, should not contradict them. Therefore, even some Qurʾanic verses are understood differently in their wording, for example the punishment for theft: it is seen as a suggestion of taking the thief into custody, not as a suggestion of amputating the hand. *Maqāṣid* thus became an independent source, derived, again, from the Qurʾan and Sunna, because of the link to classical methodology, which is important for most of these scholars. Modern authors criticise the classical *ʾuṣūl al-fiqh* but try to use the concept on *maqāṣid* for modern times. The contemporary understanding of *maqāṣid* differs fundamentally from the classical understanding. *Maqāṣid* has now become a source for different disciplines such as Islamic Finance, Medicine, Bio-Ethics, and political discussions on human rights, also for hermeneutical discussions on how to understand the Qurʾan and Sunna, as well as for our purpose: social work. Contemporary contributors to *maqāṣid*, like aṭ-Ṭāhir b. ʿĀshūr (d. 1973), Aḥmad ar-Raysūnī, and Jasser Auda (2008), mainly criticise the limitation of essential necessities to five. They say that there are more interests and necessities to be regarded than those mentioned in the classical sources. We therefore have different approaches to *maqāṣid*, like reinterpretation. Take Khaled Abou El-Faḍl for example, who tries to find freedom of religion in the Qurʾan; and those who seek extension, like Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), who expanded on the *maqāṣid* in his study *al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī* (For a detailed analysis see Ibrahim, 2006, 157–198). Most scholars concentrate on extending the *maqāṣid* in such a fashion that human rights are also included. For example, aṭ-Ṭāhir b. ʿĀshūr is a scholar who sticks to the classical *maqāṣid* but sees them as a general

category for humankind and divides *maṣlaḥa* into general and specific. Specific *maqāṣid* are those which we have already seen in al-Ghazālī's studies in a more extended fashion (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 2011). European authors also follow the trend of extension. Tariq Ramadan, for example, says that each *maqṣad* can be gained through reasoning and reading the two books of God: the Qurʾan and the universe. The universe for him is, like we know from different scholars, like a book which guides us to the truth. Ramadan tries to systematise the *maqāṣid* anew, where he sets the protection of religion and the interest of humans on top. He divides the overall *maqāṣid* into three categories: protection of life, of nature, and of peace. These *maqāṣid*, according to Ramadan, refer again to the protection or preservation of *maqāṣid* such as dignity, knowledge, creativity, equality and freedom (Ramadan, 2009, 136–144).

Critique of the Maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa Approach

These *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* approaches, which widen *maṣlaḥa* in so far that they become an independent source of law, show some methodological and theological discrepancies. The main problem of contemporary *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* approaches, however, is that we do not know how most authors derive their *maqāṣid*; they do not describe how they arrived at them nor why they propose them in their writings. All these approaches must tackle the question of avoiding arbitrariness in finding *maqāṣid* – although they know that their own historical and social circumstances determine what should be seen as *maqṣad*. Referring to the Qurʾan does not avoid arbitrariness completely, as Opwis points out:

> Largely absent from contemporary discussions are questions about who determines the universals and the particulars derived from the sources. It comes as no surprise that, when comparing different interpretations of the purposes of the law, we find very diverse results. Duderija and Attia, for example, both identify "affection" (*mawadda*), "compassion" (*raḥma*), and "repose" (*sakīna*) as divine objectives in the realm of the family. But Duderija interprets these purposes as evidence for a gender-egalitarian Islamic family law, whereas Attia employs them to assert traditional gender hierarchies. (Opwis, 2017, 30)

At first sight, the above-mentioned necessities according to the *maqāṣid* seem to form theologically justified bases for Islamic social work, because it is easy to argue that Islamic social work can be understood as a concrete realisation of protection of life; the protection of life is generally undetermined, as it is held in general terms. However, the problem with this type of reasoning is that it is impossible to argue in favour of any *maṣlaḥa* or concept without going back to the authoritative texts and re-interpreting them. The backbone of *maṣlaḥa* and later theories is the epistemological standpoint that humans cannot, at least not with certainty, know what is good and bad: only the sources can determine this. For every *maṣlaḥa*, scholars should therefore refer to the sources to determine whether something is good or bad. The *maṣlaḥa*-concept was developed according to a specific epistemology, in which knowledge through transmission, as a category of so-called acquired knowledge

(*al-ʿilm al-muktasab*), is held as certainty (*qaṭʿ*, *yaqīn*). In addition, knowledge through the senses is regarded as necessary knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ḍarūrī*), which cannot be falsified. Nowadays, we know however that both these categories cannot be considered certain or necessary knowledge. It is thus highly problematic to consider *maqāṣid/maṣāliḥ* for social work or other disciplines, due to the epistemological discrepancies. In addition, *maqāṣid* and *maṣāliḥ* lack awareness of historical determination. Most *maṣāliḥ* and *maqāṣid*, with few exceptions, historically arose in certain circumstances and cannot be seen as universal. The ahistorical reading of the sources also has further theological impacts. As Opwis notes: "Positive man-made laws, which had become part of Islamic legal identity are, thus, incorporated into the realm of the divine law and are given theoretical justification by the concept of *maṣlaḥa*." (Opwis, 2010, 80)

Additionally, *maqāṣid* based argumentation leads to a dichotomy of thinking: either an action is allowed (*jāʾiz*) or invalid in the classical realm of actions, being obligatory (*wājib*), recommended (*mandūb*), permissible (*mubāḥ*), disapproved of (*makrūh*), or forbidden (*ḥarām*). There is no room for circumstantial changes, in which different solutions to the same problem can co-exist once an action is classed as invalid or even forbidden. This can lead to a lack of historical awareness and consciousness of circumstances. What is needed is a theologically argued basis which allows awareness of the historical dimension of the *maṣāliḥ* and the sources from which they come. Since the midst of the twentieth century, scholars have concentrated more on historical readings of the Qurʾan and Sunna, such as Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (d. 2010), Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), and particularly Ömer Özsoy, in Germany. If we look at the evolution of Islamic law in the first two centuries after the Hijra, we discover that Iraqi scholars in particular argue strictly in favour of historical circumstances: even the Qurʾan sees historical circumstances as a given factor. The term which the Qurʾan frequently uses for actions already established in society prior to its revelation is *al-maʿrūf*. *Al-maʿrūf* provides a theological justification for concepts like social work, with a high awareness of historicity of actual solutions and problems. Before discussing *al-maʿrūf* further, I want to draw attention to the needs-based methodology of Mahmoud Bassiouni, who used his argument in a discussion on the universality of *maqāṣid* and its relevance to human rights.

Al-maʿrūf and Human Needs as a Key Concept for Islamic Social Work

Needs as a Basis for Islamic Social Work

Instead of concentrating on whether the Qurʾan or Hadith contain detailed information on social work, we can ask what needs people have. In this way, we can decide whether social work is necessary for solving social problems. Significantly, the Qurʾan and the Sunna do not ignore people's needs. Quite the contrary: the Qurʾan

directly relates information or solutions to everyday life and to the questions of its addressees, as in Q 2:217, 2:219 –220, and 8:1. Regardless of religious identity and insofar as the Qurʾan is understood as a universal book, a mercy for humankind, the question of knowing people's needs remains. Bassiouni tries to identify these needs and focuses on them in his study as bases for a universal understanding of human rights and *maqāṣid*. He differentiates between objective-universal needs and subjective-historical need orientations (*Bedürfnisorientierung*). Since the latter is subjective and can be concretised in various fashions, he concentrates on universal-objective needs. For him, these needs represent indispensable and fundamental conditions of human existence (Bassiouni, 2014, 268–269). Bassiouni lists some basic human needs, quoting Abraham Maslow from a motivation psychological perspective. According to Maslow, people have physiological needs, such as the need for a stable food supply, for security, and for affiliation, love, and respect. In my view, this is crucial for social work, as well as for self-realisation (Bassiouni, 2014, 270–276; Maslow, 2014). Gasiet on the other hand, as Bassiouni recognises, categorises human needs into four categories: (1) Physiological needs, (2) need for interpersonal relationships, (3) need for respect, and (4) need for meaning (*Sinngebung*) (Bassiouni, 2014, 277; Gasiet, 1981). In contrast to Maslow, Gasiet does not place the different categories within a hierarchy; he sees them as interwoven (Bassiouni, 2014, 277). After further analysis of the concept of needs, such as the classification of needs in peace and conflict studies, Bassiouni concludes that these different approaches have a common ground and rather than contradicting each other, they are in accordance with each other. This mainly entails: the need for physiological health, for security, for affiliation, for respect, and for meaning (*Sinngebung*). These needs are so essential to human life that they can be seen as objects of protection for human rights as institution (Bassiouni, 2014, 294). In my view, these needs can also be seen as bases for social work: the bases for social work are empirically and objectively comprehensible human needs. Social work can address these needs, irrespective of the religious affiliation of possible addressees. In turn, this enables people to understand, regardless of their religious identity, social work's necessity. Only then can we concretise social work as Islamic social work, with special reference to the Muslim tradition. It can also address a broader public than only Muslims, which is an important key in a multicultural society.

I would also suggest avoiding burdened technical terms for need, such as *maṣlaḥa* (interest) or *ḥādja* (need); rather, I suggest using Qurʾanic concepts like *al-maʿrūf* (the known). *Al-maʿrūf* is free of the conceptual chains of the Islamic law tradition; as we will see later, *al-maʿrūf* also allows for concretising needs and solving problems in daily life with a high degree of awareness of historicity and changes of circumstances. Furthermore, it allows contemporary concepts of social work to be linked to Islamic tradition and legitimises it through theological arguments without only justifying it theologically. As far as people's needs are concerned, the Qurʾanic concept of *al-maʿrūf* seems to be the most fitting concept and offers a theologically acceptable solution to ethical problems. I will continue to discuss *al-maʿrūf* and its different categories by referring to Reinhart's analysis of *al-maʿrūf*.

Al-maʿrūf in the Qurʾan

We have seen that, regardless of their religious identity, humans have needs, which should be met by the state or society itself. If we consider this as a basis for Islamic social work, it enables us to widen its scope and addressees. Islamic social work will then not only be related to and limited to Muslims. Theological arguments are not used for its substantiation (*Begründungsdiskurs*), but rather as a significant discourse of legitimation, since it is crucial in a multicultural society for most people to understand the importance of social work. In a second step, the theological justification can be put forward. The concept of *al-maʿrūf*, as we will see, allows circumstances to be considered, for which the Qurʾan has formulated solutions, and for the question of what *al-maʿrūf* means today to be addressed. This consciousness of changing circumstances and historicity of *al-maʿrūf* tolerates plurality and diversity, whether in the concept or in practical solutions to the same problems. It is true however that such dynamism can lead to uncertainty when tackling the question of what 'Islamic social work' actually is.

Al-maʿrūf is, as K. Reinhart describes, a Medinese word: It occurs in the Surahs, which were revealed after the Hijra of the Prophet Muḥammad. We can translate *al-maʿrūf* as the known, which is quite vague, and, as Reinhart already pointed out, is kept intentionally vague by the Qurʾan (Reinhart, 2017, 59–60). Reinhart says:

> The first thing to notice is precisely that the Qur'ān does not need to spell out what and how everything is to be done. The Qur'ān assumes that *some part of the good enjoined by the Qur'ān is known without revelational stipulation. It is ordinary knowledge to which the Qur'ān refers.* "You *know* what to do and how to do it", says the Qur'ān. (Reinhart, 2017, 61)

Thus, the Qurʾan – or God, theologically speaking – trusts in humans that they are able to know which is the best option in a particular situation, which may even have become common practice in society. The Qurʾan does not criticise the practice of pre-Islamic Arabia, but rather, at some point, confirms practices which solve people's problems and correspond to a need. In doing so, the Qurʾan considers different sources of knowledge (Reinhart, 2017, 61). The opposite of *maʿrūf* is *munkar*, that which is rejected by the society, because it is known to be reprehensible (Reinhart, 2017, 64).

At first glance, one may expect *maʿrūf* to be linked to the concept of *ʿurf* (custom), but this is a fallacy. *ʿUrf* is a concept of the later *ʾuṣūl al-fiqh* which indicates customs known and practiced under the prophet's and later generations (Reinhart, 2017, 64). As Reinhart points out:

> [I]t seems to me that this fettering of *maʿrūf* to custom is a mistake. *Maʿrūf* is something "known" but not necessarily practiced (as *ʿurf* is practiced); it might be something recently known or discovered, or something known only upon reflection. *ʿUrf* knowledge includes

> various forms of expertise (butchers testifying on butchers' practices, for instance) but *maʿrūf* is a broader category.[2] (Reinhart, 2017, 63)

The equation of *maʿrūf* and *ʿurf* would seem to undermine the power of *maʿrūf*. However, Reinhart sees three different categories of *al-maʿrūf* as distinct from *ʿurf* in the Qurʾanic context. The first use of *al-maʿrūf* is known through the Qurʾanic concept of ordering the known and forbidding the reprehensible (*al-ʾamr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-n-nahy ʿan al-munkar*). For Reinhart, and also according to the *tafsīr*-literature, *al-maʿrūf* stands for the good: *al-ʾamr bi-l-maʿrūf* then means to command the good. The action which according to the Qurʾan should be ordered is unspecified, but known to be good (Reinhart, 2017, 64).

The second type of *al-maʿrūf* is, according to Reinhart, in the realm of public or candid behaviour: "To use well-known, unambiguous statements, not unclear or secret (*sirr*) commitments." (Reinhart, 2017, 64) In these cases, the Qurʾan also trusts humans to know how to behave in difficult situations. It does not determine this behaviour but rather counts on humans' ability to independently know what should be done and what is adequate. The Qurʾan only recalls this duty.

The third category of *al-maʿrūf*, still following Reinhart's argumentation, is a more specific category of the second; it refers to knowledge and behaviour covered by "in kindly fashion", to know what to say in "scenarios of social stress and [with] the potential for divisiveness" (Reinhart, 2017, 65). Reinhart lists some of these situations and mentions what is important for us in the realm of social work: the need for support. For him, *al-maʿrūf* in this third meaning:

> It is precisely the ability to respond dynamically and appositely to a situation that reveals the person gifted at such interactions. There are no *rules* for being a sympathetic responder, a talented gift-giver, a wise counsellor, a healing member of a family when death or divorce have sundered it. (Reinhart, 2017, 66)

Reinhart also points out, and I fully agree with him, that not everybody is or can be excellent in these fields of life mentioned. It takes a special talent or even training to be sensitive enough to know exactly how to behave or what to say; but the important point here is that the Qurʾan trusts its addressees to know what to say and what to do. This is – in my view – where Islamic social work can have its starting point: with concepts of *maʿrūf*-behaviour for specific situations, which require special skills. These special skills should not be sought in the Qurʾan, because the Qurʾan is vague concerning *maʿrūf* and good behaviour. As Reinhart shows us, terms for good behaviour like *khayr* and *ṣāliḥ* are often vague (Reinhart, 2017, 58–59), except for a description of *birr* in Q 2:177, where we have a list of different actions which in sum lead to *birr*, e. g. piety. We can conclude that the Qurʾan has an open texture (Reinhart, 2017, 67) and allows Muslims to include different concepts and diverse sources of knowledge for reflecting on good and adequate behaviour in daily life. Unlike the *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* approach, *al-maʿrūf* allows already established practices to be considered and does not lead to a dichotomy of permitted and

[2] Hawting (2006, 316) differentiates also between *ʿurf* and *maʿrūf* and relates *ʿurf* to the discourse of Islamic law.

prohibited. Rather, it enables reflection on adequacy in different circumstances and advocates for each *maʿrūf* being determined by its own historical context. That is why *al-maʿrūf* remains as dynamic as it was during the lifetime of the Prophet, and more precisely at the time of the Qurʾan's revelation.

This concept is in accordance with the evolution of Islamic law and the term *sunna*, which can be roughly translated as convention and tradition. This is significant because *al-maʿrūf* and Sunna, both terms were the locus of ethical discussion of human acts. In the literature on the origins and evolution of Islamic law, Islamic law is mostly seen as having been radically combined with the legal culture of Arabia and its neighbours. This does not mean that Islamic law consists only of copies of existing norms and standards. Rather, the Qurʾan adopts norms, instructions, and rulings for just behaviour and acts, with a specific interest in criticising and changing unjust conventions (Zellentin, 2013; Kurnaz, 2018, 122–127). However, in doing so, the Qurʾan remains vague in many of its juristic statements, except for rulings on divorce, marriage, and succession. This is a clear hint of its approach of only intervening where necessary. Fazlur Rahman has already analysed the Qurʾan's ethical principles, to understand how and when the Qurʾan intervened. He also examines how we can intervene today, according to the message and not to the exact wording of the Qurʾan (Rahman, 1982, 20–21), which the classical approach to Islamic law still demands today. Qurʾan and Sunna remained intertwined, each with its own local specificities; for example, Sunna was used until the mid-third century after the Hijra, both for the general practice of Muslims and the tradition of Muḥammad. Al-Shāfiʿī's (d. 204/820) and his colleagues' attempts lead to a narrow understanding of Sunna, in the tradition of Muḥammad and no one else. Since the end of the third century, local traditions were kept up until the traditionalist approach triumphed in Islamic legal theory, only allowing rational argumentation within a narrow scope, as far as can be judged from books of legal theory (Kurnaz, 2018, 122–127). The case of practical law has not yet been sufficiently analysed to conclude that it was as rigid as legal theory supposes. We can see, for example, that the Ḥanafī jurist al-Sarakhsī (d. 483/1090) used different hermeneutical tools to actualise Islamic law and find solutions which fit given circumstances, such as his argument of al-maqṣūd (Kurnaz, 2019, 125–149). The first two and a half centuries of Islamic law tried to maintain the Qurʾanic tradition of regarding more than religious sources as references. It gave freedom to the human mind, to distinguish between good and bad, and find solutions to problems in different fields of life. The principal question then is which conduct, behaviour, or training is the most *maʿrūf* for solving problems, by concentrating on society's needs and not what the Qurʾan would have said if analysed exhaustively.

I am nonetheless aware of the risks of such an argument. Questions which may arise are: How can we deal with *al-maʿrūf* in a society which is in direct contradiction with the Qurʾan? Is it possible to have an Islamic social work concept? What is then, if not by reference to the Qurʾan, the quality of being 'Islamic'? To me, it seems that Muslim scholars rarely asked what 'Islamic' meant and that references to the Qurʾan guaranteed to it to be 'Islamic'. The core point is that human actions should not contradict Qurʾanic principles – even if discovering Qurʾanic principles

is problematic and can be as subjective as the *maqāṣid*-approaches I criticised. An awareness of fallibility and a high degree of reflection is essential when suggesting reasoned solutions. The attribute of being 'Islamic' can therefore originate in closeness to Muslim traditions, in various Muslim conducts and behaviours. Cultural sensitivity, which is partly interwoven with religious convictions shared by the Muslim community, can be a basis for discovering what 'Islamic' means. In this respect, *maʿrūf* allows consideration of cultural and religious sensitivity, which may also include other cultural sensitivities, allows reflection on them and helps to find new ways. Significantly, the Qurʾan and its *maʿrūf*-concept can be read as emancipatory; they allow, for example, Islamic social work to be compatible with a plural society. To follow the concept of *al-maʿrūf*, no theory should determine what Islamic social work is, but rather practice itself should demonstrate what can be classified as Islamic.

Conclusion

We have seen that the Muslim tradition of legal theory tried to find solutions to cases not mentioned in Qurʾan and Sunna, through concepts like *maṣlaḥa* and, in modern times, through *maqāṣid ash-sharīʿa*. This is a concept which examined the epistemological boundaries of a traditionalist attitude towards religious sources: only the sources can show what is good and bad. In modern times, scholars have interpreted *maṣlaḥa* as the objectives of the Sharʿia (*maqāṣid ash-sharīʿa*) and made it an independent source. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of epistemological reflection on the *maqāṣid-cum-maṣlaḥa* approach. This leads to theological and methodological dead-ends in argumentation and also results in thinking in dichotomies of validity and invalidity. There is a risk of universalising *maṣāliḥ*, which were only seen as *maṣāliḥ* by scholars due to historical, social or other circumstances. With the focus on Islamic legal theoretical treatise and books, the Qurʾanic ethical concept of *al-maʿrūf* has often been forgotten. It is a concept which considered the historical and social circumstances in which known, good actions were developed to solve legal and ethical problems relating to different sources of knowledge, especially human experience. This seems to be the reason why ethical concepts like *maʿrūf* and *iḥsān* are only explored vaguely in the Qurʾan. So, if we recognise a need to be solved or addressed which is not necessarily recognised in theological argumentation but rather by empirical data, then *maʿrūf* can allow the good and known conduct to be integrated into society, or new solutions based on human experience to be developed. Social work, for example, can then become Islamic social work, because *maʿrūf* also enables actions to be questioned, not only regarding their adequacy to human experience, but also to Muslim tradition and principles.

Referring to Islamic principles can be risky, as they can seem very vague and we do not necessarily have objective criteria to uncover them. Yet, if we read the Qurʾan historico-critically, we have better chances of coming closer to the principles the Qurʾan had during the time of its revelation. This fits into the evolution of Islamic

law, which is still a field of discussion today concerning ethical questions – whether this should change is a different problem which cannot be tackled here. It showed an awareness of local traditions and the *maʿrūf*, but shifted during the third century after the Hijra, in favour of a text-centred model of reflecting and arguing, instead of a human experience-centred one. Hence, looking back to the very early evolution of Islamic law and the time of the Qurʾan's revelation, *al-maʿrūf* seems to be a concept which emancipates from the wording of the Qurʾan and Sunna. It allows questions to be considered in accordance with Muslim tradition and for the Prophet's and the Qurʾan's message to be seen with more flexibility and dynamism. The question of *what the Qurʾan says* can be avoided, eliminating the disadvantages mentioned in relation to the *maqāṣid*-approach: *al-maʿruf* offers a more flexible, more practically relevant approach to social work rather than being only theoretical. Furthermore, looking for ethical concepts in Hadith, where we can find brief statements by the Prophet Muḥammad establishing *al-maʿrūf* as the backbone of ethical discussions, the *maʿrūf* can be discovered as it was during his lifetime and then actualised.

In addition, we could avoid the problem of overestimating man-made solutions as part of divine law. If we consider that the Qurʾanic concept of *al-maʿrūf* accepts how society generally functions, we have to concentrate on what is known and good in everyday life practice – no theology, apart from social practice, should show how Muslims could contribute to the society to solve ethical problems. This does not advocate anything goes, but rather a practice in social work which solves the needs and necessities of society, and, as mentioned above, can be theologically valid without going back to the Qurʾan and Sunna or the *maqāṣid ash-sharīʿa*. This is to say that every solution should be reflected on, in relation to changing circumstances, as well as time and space; *al-maʿrūf* can change, and therefore social practice should, too: there is room for ambiguity. The remaining question is always: what is most beneficial for society, considering people's needs and avoiding harm, since harm and benefit are highly circumstantial according to Islamic law?

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Islamic Practical Theology: *waqf* and *zakāt* as Theological Foundations

Tarek Badawia

Abstract Islamic practical theology represents a conceptual framework for Islamic social work as well as other fields of practice, such as pastoral care. In these fields, it is necessary to meet professional standards but theological reflection is also required. Islamic faith is intrinsically linked to social justice, good deeds and helping mankind, while material greed is strongly criticised by the Qurʾan. This chapter focuses on two terms and concepts which can play a major role in such a reflection: the first is *waqf* (endowment) which, going back to the practice of the Prophet and the first caliphs, binds property to charitable intentions and to God, as a receiver and possessor of all things. Manifold examples from the history of social welfare in Islam express how *waqf* has been implemented in different contexts. The second concept is *zakāt* (compulsory alms) which, as a central religious duty of solidarity, is intended to guarantee social peace and the dignity of the poor and needy. According to the Qurʾan, there are eight groups of recipients of *zakāt*. Looking at parallels between the historical context and the current context of establishing Muslim welfare care in modern societies demonstrates how *zakāt* can potentially be put into practice. For this purpose, classical and modern positions are brought into conversation. Contrary to some interpretations, the Qurʾan's open-minded hermeneutics do not address a particular religious affiliation, so *zakāt* in fact goes beyond religious categories and can be applied in multicultural and plural societies. Consequently, the aim should be to integrate Muslim activities and reflections into the framework of modern welfare states. Openly understood in this way, Muslim welfare can enrich society without dividing it.

Keywords Islamic practical theology · Welfare state · Solidarity · *waqf* · *zakāt*

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Introduction

With this chapter, I would like to clarify what I understand by the concept of practical theology as a common term for a theology of Islam which aims to address the social questions and problems at the heart of life. A brief review of the last two decades, which were filled with rapid turmoil and change within our immigration society, as well as within communities of Muslim social background, reveals an increasing need for professionally organised support facilities along with a demand-oriented supply of welfare services.

Communities and so-called backyard mosques are going through a process of structural change and need to reshape their educational mission. The original educational mission of the congregations, which aimed solely to preserve Muslim identity among the diaspora, needs to be transformed into an opening of the theological discipline to take into account the concerns and problems of congregation members. This can only be achieved if the change is accompanied by the development of a special kind of practical theology. The process of change also affects Muslims based in Europe in their everyday life, as they need advice when dealing with educational issues, violence, radicalisation of Muslim youth or health care.

Practical theology, as we know, did not derive from the context of Islamic theology, although it has always been very close to the core idea of charitable religiosity. According to my understanding, *waqf* can be regarded as an equivalent to the concept of practical theology in the Christian tradition and plays an important role in bringing out equality and human development. "Literally, *waqf* means to stop, contain, or to preserve. In *shari'a*, the term describes a voluntary, permanent, irrevocable dedication of a portion of one's wealth – in cash or kind – to Allah." (Musari, 2016, 4)

Therefore, practical theology is a generic term which refers to various fields of action such as pastoral care and social work. Furthermore, it can include all conceivable social services that serve to develop and improve skills related to a healthy lifestyle such as self-efficacy, life management and, last but not least, resilience. We do not aim at a conventional theological education. From the perspective of the individual, it is the promotion of theological reflection in dealing with social problems, and overall, with the ever-increasing complexity of everyday life. On a social level, practical theology serves to shape the social ideal which a society represents spiritually. For Islamic practical theology this would mean: the establishment of desired general welfare (*maṣlaḥa*), according to the principle of social justice.

In the following chapter, we assume that the professional understanding of social work should not suffer from religious colouring. We are clearly opposed to the idea of a special 'Islamic social welfare'. Professional social work – to put it more precisely – should not only target the interest of a special group: on the contrary, the impulse of Muslim thoughts and ideas for social services should be professionalised in a socio-educational manner. This intention will be demonstrated by the following: a brief explanation of the basic ideas of endowment, and compulsory alms (*zakāt*). Allow me at this point to mention merely the opening sentence of a long prophetic saying (Hadith) as an example:

> Those favoured by Allah are the useful souls! Allah approves of the following actions: bringing joy to the heart of a person, taking care of someone, freeing someone from the burden of debt, giving the hungry food and nourishment. I also prefer to accompany someone and do good for that person rather than staying in the mosque (*iʿtikāf*) for a month; Whoever has his anger under control, experiences God's protection for his weakness; He who controls his anger while he is able to enforce it, fills Allah's heart with satisfaction on the day of judgment; He who accompanies his brother until he reaches his goal safely, will surely reach his goal on the day of judgment, a day on which many people will miss their goals; Bad manners truly spoil every good deed, just as vinegar spoils the taste of honey. (Al-Ṭabarānī: Al-muʿğam al-awṣaṭ, Hadith No. 6:139)

Faith transforms man into someone who, among other things, gives away his possessions for the needy, whether they be relatives, orphans, the poor, travellers, or beggars, and for (the ransom of) slaves, as well as in the event of calamities. Qurʾanic exegesis offers an insight into the meaning of the term *birr*, its complex and multilayered structure: the term *birr* stands for actions that extend beyond the individual arena and positively involve other people. *Birr* essentially means doing good to people (Helli, 2017, 122, 136ff.). Helli notes that three areas of *birr* are addressed: faith, interpersonal actions and actions between man and God, or joint actions. In addition, Helli draws attention to a fourth dimension, which is enormously important for pastoral care and social work, namely acting on one's own self. Steadfastness in times of need, suffering and crisis is elementary within pastoral care and social work– for both partners of the process, the service provider and the beneficiary.

Although practical theology is not familiar as a term of Islamic erudition, it has played a central role since the beginning of the revelation of Islam in the seventh century. Islam has been from the beginning and is still now, a religion with a strong socio-ethical and social-religious character. Even the first Surah of the revelation addresses social-critical and social issues such as wealth and poverty, equality of all people and various forms of social disadvantage. The social-religious consciousness in Islam is familiar to every Muslim. Thus, the allegory of the single body of the community and the feeling of holistic pain when a member of this body is affected based on a prophetic saying in which this allegory is used (Muslim: Ṣahīḥ, Hadith No. 2586), has remained valid until today as a symbol of community solidarity and one of true faith. "No one is truly believable who goes to bed satiated while he knows that his neighbour is starving" (Al-Albānī, 1994, 1:279), are the words of the Prophet Muhammad. For this purpose, Islamic theology has constructed the concept of *waqf* – welfare or endowment – as a field of action for practical theology and filled it with many wonderful examples in terms of content. Against this background, it is somewhat difficult to understand why the infrastructure of Islamic welfare is not fully developed enough to cater for the needs of Muslims living in Europe. The great challenge, among other things, is to empower a conscious identification with the principles and fundamental values of the welfare state and to build up social responsibility for the social integration of all people. A turnaround has already taken place in the self-image of the majority of Muslims as citizens of this society. It is the task of science, civil society and politics to actively shape this process.

Religiosity in the Sense of Social Justice

The Islamic doctrine of faith has – from the very beginning – been characterised by the call for monotheism (*tawḥīd*), yet this call was never theologically abstract. Faith in God was always connected to the core idea of helping mankind in all circumstances. Thus, the entry of Islam into the social world at the beginning of the revelation happened mainly due to socio-ethical and sociopolitical input. The demand for social justice and equality of all human beings was even embedded in the Qurʾan (Q 18:28). This was also supported by the fact that on the Arabian Peninsula of the sixth century, religion or faith were not regarded as unfamiliar phenomena. Both, the Abrahamic monotheistic tradition (*al-ḥanīfiyya*) and the worship of various deities and sanctuaries, shaped the religious image of Arabia (Halm, 2010, 20ff.).

The knowledge of Allah was widespread (Q 29:61; 31:25; 39:28; 43:87). What the Arabian peninsula did not know of, however, was a uniform or comprehensive sociopolitical order, which regulated social class differences, legal relations among different groups of society, sociopolitical issues such as the equality of all people (Q 4:1; 21:46; 49:13), justice (Q 4:135; 55:6–8; 57:25; 16:90) and a fair distribution of wealth. The message of Islam, which the Prophet himself embodied authentically, also consistently sought the liberation of the oppressed people from the rule of the Meccans. The first Surahs in the chronology of the revelation attested to this fact, in particular to the lack of a sense of social responsibility, and addressed the grievances of socially disadvantaged groups such as women, slaves, and the poor; they denounced unjust ownership and, above all, the misuse of money and the inhuman use of interest. The message of God, the merciful, was closely connected to the scales as a symbol for righteous action:

> The Compassionate taught the Quran; created man. (…) Heaven He has raised and the Balance He has set, that you transgress not in the balance. So set right the weight and fall not short in the balance. (Q 55:1–9)[1]

The revelation unequivocally criticised "the desire for more" (Q 102), greed for money (Q 104), deceit and unjust actions (*muṭaffifīn*) (Q 83), the cruel ancient custom of burying unwanted new-born girls alive (Q 16:59; 81:9), unjust inheritance structures and abuse of the property of orphans (Q 5:10; 6:152; 17:34). With regard to the weak members of society, the ruling stratum of the Meccans was criticised for not practicing polytheism and idolatry as a deep faith, but instrumentalising it for the oppression of people. Since then, the Qurʾan has acted as a voice for the socially weak and has had an oppositional character when it comes to social injustice.

In the 14th year of revelation, according to the history of the early Muslim community, God ordered a change in the direction of prayer. Since then, Muslims have no longer directed their prayers to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in present-day Jerusalem, but to the Al-Harām Mosque in Mecca. What seems of particular interest in the

[1] All Translations of the Qurʾan by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (The Study Quran).

present context is the socio-ethical response of revelation in the debate sparked within the multi-religious society of Medina, regarding the meaning and purpose of changing the direction of prayer. The following verse marks an important turning point in the fundamental understanding of religiosity as a social action and basically prevents any kind of non-purposeful debate about religious affiliations. It draws attention to the common responsibility to provide social assistance services:

> It is not piety to turn your faces toward the east and west. Rather, piety is he who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; and who gives wealth, despite loving it, to kinsfolk, orphans, the indigent, the traveler, beggars, and for [the ransom of] slaves; and performs the prayer and gives the alms; and those who fulfill their oaths when they pledge them, and those who are patient in misfortune, hardship, and moments of peril. It is they who are the sincere, and it is they who are the reverent. (Q 2:177)

At the level of religious practice, the language of the Qurʾan distinguishes between good deeds for the individual (*ḥasanāt*) and socially oriented deeds (*ṣāliḥāt*). Both types of good deeds are certainly not to be separated and flow into each other in terms of their individual and social effects. Fasting, for example, expresses the bipolarity of Islamic religiosity. A close bond with God supports the fasting person's effort to renounce individual needs and replaces the temporal limitation of daily habits life with spiritual experiences and the development of strength of character. However, fasting is inconceivable without a socio-ethical dimension of solidarity. This fact also applies to the levy of a poor tax, as will be explained further down. But firstly, a concretion of this social idea from the life of the prophet will be briefly presented.

The Basic Principle of Ongoing Donation and the Theological Support of a Social Foundation – *waqf*

When man dies – as mentioned in a prophetic saying (Muslim: Ṣaḥīḥ, Hadith No. 1631) – the possibility of doing good ends for him. However, any socially effective deed can be viewed as an option for society to benefit from it beyond the death of a person. The Prophet himself cites the following three examples: a continuously productive fundraising activity; knowledge from which people can benefit sustainably; a well-educated person who, praying for his parents, multiplies the good. Among other things, the idea of *waqf* is derived from the first example: "continuously productive fundraising activities".

The first institution of 'social assistance or welfare' was created by the Prophet's decision to establish a place of residence for all the socially disadvantaged and needy. The term *ahlu-ṣ-ṣuffa* embodies the core idea of solidarity within the Islamic doctrine. *Ahlu-ṣ-ṣuffa* (Q 2:273 and 9:92) were the inhabitants of a shelter near the Prophet's mosque in Medina. They were mainly poor and defenceless, having emigrated from various cities of Arabia to Medina to seek refuge with the Prophet Mohammad. In addition, there were always other emigrants from Mecca in need of help, who had initially found a place to stay in this emergency shelter until they

found assistance and established contacts in the city of Medina. Most of the inhabitants neither had relatives in Medina, nor were they wealthy enough to establish an independent existence. For the very few who, by their own efforts, failed to integrate into the new Medinean society, the *ṣuffa* remained permanent. Caring for the poor inhabitants of the *ṣuffa* was always one of the main concerns of the Prophet. He commissioned his close companions and his daughter Fatima to collect the alms tax and to send it to the inhabitants.

During the Medinean phase, this first shelter turned into a learning community, in which the residents were assigned the task of caring for and teaching young Muslims. Over time, living in poverty and financial dependence led to an ascetic teaching and learning community with a socially vital mission in educational matters. When the Muslims arrived in Medina and became involved in the society, the companion and brother-in-law of the Prophet, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, bought a well with his own money and made it available to all the inhabitants of Medina as a "public water dispenser" (Al-Tirmidhī: Jāmiʿ aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ, Hadith No. 3703). Similar facts are reported about the second caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. He contributed to the establishment of *waqf* as an institution (*dīwān*) organised by the state (Bukhārī: Ṣahīḥ, Hadith No. 2737; Muslim: Ṣahīḥ, Hadith No. 1632). His property could no longer be sold, inherited or donated. The eternal receiver – figuratively speaking – is God, while all the needy can benefit from the proceeds.

The Moroccan legal scholar and world traveller of the fourteenth century, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 1377), wrote the travel journal *ar-Riḥla* (The Long Journey – which lasted about 29 years), one of the most important works of the Middle Ages. He was named the "Marco Polo of the Orient". In this travel report, entitled "sights for foreign travellers and the wonders of travel" he described, among other things, his fascination with the effectiveness of *waqf*, from which he greatly benefited in the course of his journey. A unique example, on which Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reported during his stay in Damascus, was the "public foundation for the protection of the household" (*awqāf al-awānī*). He himself witnessed an event, when a young housekeeper dropped an expensive piece of porcelain which broke into pieces. He was immediately advised to collect the broken remains and to bring them to the "*waqf* area for the replacement of household items". Ibn Baṭṭūṭa describes the function of this particular *waqf* as a "social healing place for broken hearts" (kāna haṭa al-waqf jabran li-l-qulūb). The public foundations (*awqāf*) – as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa concludes – embody within Islam the fundamental value of brotherhood among believers, as well as the human attachment to all people, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or regional origin (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 2001, 17ff.).

In his travel report, the geographer and travel journal writer Granadas Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217) highlighted the significance of public foundations, from which he benefited enormously as a traveller. As a foreigner in the cities of the Orient, he was able to rely on strangers (pilgrims, students, scholars, or even refugees from some regions of Andalusia), on an unfailing infrastructure of public foundations with a variety of services such as prayer, accommodation for travellers, accommodation for extended stays of ascetics (*zawāya*), food for travellers, public bathing facilities, guidance, mosques, libraries, and so forth.

In a historical study of the role of foundations (*awqāf*) as an establishment of social services and institutions, the Egyptian Ministry of Endowments (*awqāf*) names well-known mosques, hospitals and schools, in addition to the following examples from the history of social welfare in Islam (Dusūqī, 2000, 24–46):

- Financial support for marriage among the poor;
- In Fes (Morocco), a foundation for the support of the visually impaired;
- Bread donation facility (in Beirut) to meet daily bread needs for families and older people;
- Wives' house (Cairo) for women, who for a certain period of time can find protection in the course of their divorce or during a family dispute, and thus are protected by the family court judge (*qāḍī*);
- Donation of clothing;
- Donation station for milk and baby food (in Damascus): this Foundation is dedicated to mothers during the lactation phase. Donations include milk, sugar, clean water and basic food for nursing mothers;
- Accommodation for strangers and passers-by (*Ibn as-sabīl*);
- Foundation for budgetary donations: this foundation is likely to mainly benefit domestic workers (service personnel) and minors who have suffered financial damage and who are unable to pay for the damage themselves (in terms of liability insurance);
- Foundation "Palace of the Poor", which was built by Nūr al-Din b. Zangī (1118–1174) known as "the righteous ruler" in the great kingdom of the Seljuks in today's Damascus. That "the needy should not be ashamed of their poverty and receive the help of society in a dignified atmosphere" –was the idea of this foundation;
- Public dining facility;
- Public cleaning service for clothes, blankets and household equipment;
- The foundation for irrigation channels and the establishment of public drinking water donors (for people and animals).

Such institutions are financed by social welfare, either through private foundations (*al-waqf al-ahlī* or *al-dhurrī*), or public foundations (*waqf khayrī*). In the first instance, the founder dedicates his foundation to a specific purpose within the extended family. This can be set up to protect family assets for a certain period of time and to promote all the needy within a family (comparable to the principle of subsidiarity). In the second instance, a public foundation is dedicated to a specific purpose for the common good, for an unlimited period of time.

The idea of *waqf*, as all the historical examples show, is based on the theological principle that man is not the true possessor of anything, only God is the true possessor. Man should – as mentioned above – be the governor of God's mercy and make it available to all people. Foundations, like no other religious charity, exemplify the concretion of the divine attributes of justice, mercy and care within the human realm. In comparison to the social question which arose in the course of industrialisation in Europe, the religiously motivated concept of *waqf* – as it will

become clearer with the topic of 'poor tax' or *zakāt* – sees itself as a principle ideal for social peace in society. This formative principle of social justice has advanced to a central religious duty.

Zakāt: The Needy's Claim to Solidarity?

In the classical concept of Islamic scholarship, the *zakāt* represents, among other things, the main funding pillar of Islamic welfare. In English, the term *zakāt* is shortened to the term 'poor tax'. However, this translation reduces the entire semantic field and the theological concept of this Islamic commandment to an aspect of supporting the poor or to the aspect of state tax (Reidegeld, 2005, 525–526). The *zakāt* is neither alms, nor tax, nor a pure aid to the poor. First and foremost, *zakāt* sees itself as a central comprehensive concept of solidarity for the promotion of social justice.

The term *zakāt* basically stands for an ethical principle for the financial promotion of social solidarity through the participation of the poor and needy in the total wealth of a society. The historical context of origin emphasises the community aspect. However, in this chapter – as is formulated in the conclusion – the position is that under the current conditions of the welfare debate, the social dimension by extension is of course at stake.

The aspect of social cohesion lies at the heart of this concept, which is to be ensured by meeting people's basic needs and fighting poverty. The aim is to preserve the dignity of people in need or of the poor and needy within society. Within Islamic theology the "right of the poor to the wealth of the wealthy" is clearly mentioned (Bukhārī: Ṣahīḥ, Hadith-No. 1396, 1458). Both traditions speak of claiming the share of the poor from the rich and returning it to the poor. Furthermore, individual responsibility for the realisation of a just community (Q 24:33) exemplifies human's status on earth as the governor of God (*khalīfatu-l-llāh*).

In contrast to the voluntary donations, which are recommended at all times (*ṣadaqa*, pl. *ṣadaqāt*), the *zakāt* (purification) is a compulsory levy; therefore, the options for its payment are defined in the Qurʾan (Q 9:60). In this verse, the term *ṣadaqāt* is used as a generic term for all possible forms of donation. However, there is clearly a consensus among scholars that this is explicitly about the spending options for the annual mandatory alms (*zakāt*) (Al-Zarqa, 1996, 2:200). Eight groups of recipients of the *zakāt* are explicitly mentioned. These are as follows:

1. For the absolutely and permanently poor to secure basic needs (*fuqarāʾ*);
2. For those with an income below the minimum subsistence level, and permanently in need (*masākīn*);
3. For the *zakāt* representative, responsible for the collection and distribution of the *zakāt* (*al-ʿāmilīn ʿalayha*);

4. For those whose hearts are to be won over for the cause of Islam. This may also include those who have lost their belongings due to their entry into Islam, so that they can be compensated for their loss (*al-muʾallafati qulūbuhum*);
5. For the liberation and redemption of slaves and the oppressed (*fi-r-riqāb*);
6. For those who borrow out of necessity (*al-ghārimīn*). This may also include compensation for victims of natural disasters who have unexpectedly become financially distressed. Several contemporary scholars also promote the possibility of financing interest-free loans (Al-Zarqa, 1996, 2:395);
7. For those who are following Allah's will (*fī sabīli-l-llāh*). This may also include those who are committed to take part in a defensive war. The reduction of this option of expenditure to the use in a defensive war is a common opinion, which we will discuss in the following;
8. For travellers who are in need and seek help on the way (*ibn as-sabīl*).

As already mentioned, these eight groups are designated as recipients for the *zakāt* as a compulsory levy, in comparison to the unlimited use of voluntary donations for all possible charitable purposes (*ṣadaqāt*). The following input refers to the parallels between the historical context and the current context of establishing Muslim welfare care in modern societies. Therefore, it can be regarded as scientific desiderata within the theological field of research. The tendency to update classical interpretation only indicates the character of reflecting on a socially integrated reading (*ḥukm* – law). As already mentioned, this task has yet to be completed by the responsible parties. From a socio-ethical perspective, several urgent questions arise about the practice of re-allocating certain spending options in connection with the establishment, for example, of a Muslim welfare association according to the principles of the welfare state. Of the eight recipient groups or expenditure options mentioned above, four will be explained in detail, as follows:

Regarding categories 1 and 2: classical scholars (from the four established *fiqh* schools[2]) sought to distinguish between the two categories of "the poor" and "the needy" and to establish a ceiling for poverty and neediness (Ibn Rušd, 2000, 408ff.; Al-Zarqa, 1996). Since it was not feasible to define such categories across regions, scholars continued trying to determine the limitations of such an assessment. For example, against this background, the scholar ash-Shāfiʿī (768–820) coined the principle: "the working person can be described with his merit as poor as well as wealthy. It depends on his income, the size of his family and the extent of his obligations." (Ibn Ḥajar, 2001, 341) With this, he referred to respective differences in language and habits in specific societies (*ʿurf*).

Erudite scholars were thus prompted to seek the principle which defines different categories. Regarding the history of creation in Surah 20, verses 118 and 119, there are constant elements to the definition of a subsistence level: food, clothing, shelter.

[2] I deliberately use the term *fiqh* schools instead of 'law schools' as the term law is heavily connotated. On the other hand, the term *fiqh* emphasises understanding as a methodological approach to the primary sources of Islamic doctrine.

Ibn Ḥazm (994–1064, Córdoba) confirmed this position and declared it to be the state's duty. He states:

> It is a duty of the wealthy to provide for the needy. The ruler can induce (if necessary) if the revenues of *zakāt* cannot meet the basic needs. The poor and needy must be provided with enough food, sufficient summer and winter clothing and dignified accommodation [on behalf of the state] to protect them from rain, the sun and living on the street. (Ibn Ḥazm, 2003, 281)

In addition to these constant elements which must be supplied, the basic needs of a person or a family are determined according to cultural practice and regional standards. Differentiated debates among scholars on the definition of a lower limit of livelihood, on protecting the dignity of people in critical situations and in poverty, on the working capacity of the poor and needy and on many other aspects cannot be of concern here (Ibn Rušd, 2000, 408ff.), as they mostly do not apply to the current living conditions of Muslims residing in Western Europe. Yet they bear witness to the intense efforts of Islamic scholarship to achieve maximum social justice in determining the meaning and purpose of *zakāt* expenditures. Where there is mixed financing of welfare associations in a functioning social system, as in many European countries, new coordination with state institutions is absolutely necessary.

Regarding category 4: this group of recipients – as mentioned above – literally consists of people whose hearts are to be won over for the cause of Islam (*al-muʾallafati qulūbuhum*). The Arabic verb *ʾallafa* emphasises the aspects of reconciliation, reparation, and benevolent union (Al-Aṣfahānī, 2009, 81). In Medina, the Prophet Mohammad dedicated the *zakāt* to those who, in his eyes, should convert to Islam. Another target group which benefited from this item of expenditure were those who suffered from financial disadvantage due to their acceptance of Islam. The Prophet granted them financial aid in order to "calm their hearts", in reference to the Qurʾanic expression.

Since the death of the Prophet, how this matter has been interpreted has been under discussion, namely whether this group of recipients should still exist after the death of the Prophet. Originally, this *zakāt* was for all people (Muslims as well as non-Muslims), whom the Prophet wanted to win over as peace makers for the young Muslim community. In the case of Muslims, the purpose of such financial assistance was their compensation for certain disadvantages (as a result of dismissal, resettlement etc.). In the case of non-Muslims, such financial assistance was originally intended to free financially weak people from possible financial dependencies so that they could decide liberally about their religious orientation. Others increased their acceptance of Islam on financial support; even then the Prophet fulfilled their wish and assigned them a share. Some tribal chiefs wanted to convince their followers of the Prophet's generosity. After the death of the Prophet and the establishment of a Muslim society, it became evident that *zakāt* was still a topic of major concern. The position represented at this point (Al-Qurṭubī, 1994, 166ff.; Al-Zarqa, 1996) does not support the abrogation of *zakāt*. Assistance is still necessary, especially with regard to families and youth.

Regarding the category 7: in view of the current social challenges in our society, this option must be thoroughly reflected upon and redesigned, with regard to civil society and the sociopolitical aspect of a Muslim contribution to the welfare system. The common and widespread reading of *fī sabīli-l-llāh* (in the way of God) is – as described above – reduced to the financing of soldiers and their families. Although this opinion is widespread and has gained a broad consensus (Al-Qurṭubī, 1994, 166ff.) among the Sunni law schools, it limits the general meaning and purpose of this *zakāt* enormously. A second, less popular, reading reduces this *zakāt* to the financing of pilgrimages and visits (*ʿumra*) for poor Muslims. The Qurʾanic expression "in the way of God" is interpreted as relating to the way to Mecca. However, we believe that the semantic field of this expression has been openly formulated for a reason. Ar-Rāzī states in his commentary on the Qurʾan: in its wording, the Qurʾanic expression *fī sabīli-l-llāh* cannot be reduced to military purposes only. The expression – according to ar-Rāzī – allows for all possible options for expenditure of this item, such as road construction, drilling wells, building mosques, setting up schools, etc. (Ar-Rāzī, 2004, 113). The scholar Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935) interprets the term *fī sabīli-l-llāh* as promoting the common good.

Against the background of this controversial discussion, I would like to suggest the use of a socio-ethical point of view. Firstly however, I will start by looking at the three categories around which the theological discussion revolves: (1) annual obligatory alms (*zakāt*); (2) voluntary donations (*ṣadaqa*) and (3) alms for breaking the fast (*zakāt al-fiṭr*).

The controversy about giving alms (*zakāt*) to non-Muslims refers only to the first category. There are two positions in this controversy (pro and contra), each of which has its legitimate justification within normative theology. These positions will not be discussed at this point, yet as there is more than one position on a disputed subject, one cannot assume that only one absolute opinion exists. This fact contradicts the maxims of legal theory (*ʾuṣūl al-fiqh*). For self-positioning in relation to this controversy we need to consider the social context in which the two legitimate positions are to be compared. I would therefore like to outline the position of al-Azhar University in order to explain my own opinion, which is thoroughly positive:

1. The Qurʾan does not address a particular religious affiliation in the respective verse in which the alms to the poor and needy are recommended (Q 9:60). The given phrasing in the Qurʾan stands for open-minded hermeneutics. These Qurʾan passages are not abrogated.
2. The Prophet is regarded as a role-model concerning obligatory alms. Under category 4 he gave alms to non-Muslims. But even beyond this category, tradition affirms that the Prophet replied to the question "to whom shall the zakāt be paid?" the following answer: "to the needy among Muslims and the dhimmis (needy Jews and Christians)" (Ibn Šayba: Muṣannaf, Hadith No. 721:911).
3. In his work "The Consensus" (*al-ijmāʿ*) the legal scholar ibn al-Mundhir (855–930) reveals the consensus among the established schools of law of his time, stating unanimously that compulsory alms (*zakāt*) are only to be forwarded to Muslims, with the exception of the category 4 of the recipients of zakāt. In this

important script ibn al-Mundhir speaks of the so called ‘charges’ (*al-dhimmi*) who are not to receive this kind of *zakāt* as they are already being provided for. Furthermore, it is noted that Abū Ḥanīfa recommended the obligatory alms (*zakāt*) be given to monks and nuns (Ibn al-Mundhir, 1999, 8–12).

4. Within both positions, there is a clear consensus that the recipient should not be classified as an enemy or an active warrior.

In summary: regarding Islamic welfare, a shift in paradigm is necessary. The establishment of a committee to process traditions and develop innovative models of expenditure for *zakāt* seems to be an indispensable necessity (Riḍā, 1968, 587ff.).

Muslim Welfare Is an Affirmation of Social Responsibility by the Muslim Community: A Conclusion

The establishment of Muslim welfare organisations in Western Europe (several charities are also conceivable) shows a ground-breaking decision by the Muslim minority to succeed in promoting the common good, by professionally contributing their culture and religious resources to support Muslims who seek help. These efforts are accompanied by the important decision that Europe needs to be considered as a new home and a new centre of life. For decades, Muslims have been the recipients of aid from religious as well as non-profit organisations and associations. Synergy can now arise when professionals with a Muslim background actively contribute their services. A Muslim welfare association would function as a possible employer, with appropriate funding, and the theological and socio-ethical knowledge to guarantee a highly professional service from an Islamic perspective. The impact of this development is vast in terms of integration policy, especially with regard to social peace.

For the development of a practical theology of Islam which is of relevance, theological tradition offers several possibilities of connectivity, which were exemplified in this text by the conceptual equivalence of *waqf* and the actual theological concept of *birr*. A readjustment of these two guiding principles towards (1) aid for the individual in coping with certain problems, and (2) changing social conditions is necessary in order to improve the living condition of those in need. In order to be able to work on both levels, practical theology must act in an interdisciplinary manner and make use of methods found within social research. The identification with society and the legal system in force correlates with a reflection and reinterpretation of conventional theological concepts. The options of *zakāt* refer to the urgent necessity for an active and people-oriented exegesis of sources regarding a new framework for a multicultural and plural society.

Considering the current situation of Muslims in Western Europe as legally equal citizens, this chapter takes the position that all people can benefit from *zakāt* expenses. The reason why this position should be emphasised at this point lies within the theological dispute over whether non-Muslims can benefit from *zakāt*

funds. As already mentioned, the expenditure items for *zakāt* are quite fixed as a religious duty, compared to the voluntary donations (*ṣadaqāt*). Thus, among classical scholars, the view prevails that only Muslims can benefit from *zakāt*, while all people benefit from *ṣadaqāt*. This is justified by the fact that only Muslims are obliged to contribute to this expenditure. However, regarding the current living conditions of Muslims in Europe, the contemporary scholar Al-Zarqa (1996) discusses, among other things, the arguments in favour of classical scholarship against the historical context of its emergence and calls for its reform. At the end of his discursive analysis, he comes to the conclusion, that the terms "poor" and "needy" are of general nature (*al-fāẓ ʿāmma*) and can therefore encompass all people (regardless of their faith and origin). If funds are scarce and cannot provide for all eligible needy citizens, funds combining *zakāt* categories 1, 2, 4 and 7 can be put into use (Al-Zarqa, 1996, 209). A society in which Muslims can enjoy all rights as equal citizens and fulfil their duties requires adjustment and kindness on both sides (Q 60:8). The good – as aṭ-Ṭabārī (838–923) clarifies – do not discriminate against anyone (Aṭ-Ṭabarī, 1998, 308 on Q 9:60). It will also be necessary to discuss how the classical *zakāt* system should be adapted in order to meet the requirements of the welfare state and the statutory benefits of welfare. Within an institutionalised Muslim welfare system able to address all those in need of help, practical theology can highlight that Muslim religiosity is clearly aimed at peace-making. Therefore, practical theology needs to be redefined, in order to refer to the living Islamic tradition of *waqf* and to engage in new forms of living and Muslim action embedded within the current context.

The ideas outlined are designed to be compatible with social policy. Muslim welfare care must not lead to the division of society: on the contrary, it should serve as a supplement and enrichment to already existing welfare systems.

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An 'Epistemic Weight' of Islamic Practical Theology in Contemporary Islamic Social Work

Nazila Isgandarova

Abstract The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the main arguments in the development of Islamic social work practice. In this respect, Islamic practical theology provides certain theories and methods as a solid foundation for Islamic social work practice. Taking into account a revival of new approaches to teaching Islamic practical theology, this paper provides reflection on the methods for teaching it, based on a new and broader understanding of theology in Islam. The primary question of this chapter is: What are the best practices in teaching Islamic practical theology which prepare Muslim social work students to connect theological understanding to the everyday experience of Muslims in the community, society and the world? The second question is: How do Muslim social workers use daily life practices as an "epistemic weight" in the production of new knowledge in Islamic social work? Finally, the chapter discusses the question of whether Islamic practical theology, including Islamic doctrine, tradition, and the "living human document", holds a central position in Islamic social work.

Keywords Islam · Social work · Practical theology · Psychotherapy · Social justice

Introduction

Islamic practical theology offers a never-ending journey of theological reflection on questions of crucial importance to Islamic social work. Great models for this ongoing training and reflection include stories of the prophets in the Qur'an. These give Muslim social service providers, including healthcare professionals and social workers, guidance as to how to be true learners in their respective fields, how to achieve profound patience, humility, serenity of the soul, and how to acquire

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beneficial knowledge through the process of *tafakkur* (to deeply and systematically meditate on a subject) and *tadabbur* (contemplation).

Dealing with a new discipline, Muslim social workers are being challenged to be experts while they are still learning and searching for insights. I am no exception. Taking into account a revival of new approaches to teaching Islamic practical theology, this chapter provides a reflection on methods of teaching Islamic practical theology, based on a new and broader understanding of theology in Islam. I provide an analysis of the role of the various sub-disciplines (i. e., Islamic social work, Islamic psychotherapy, and spiritual care) in Islamic practical theology and social sciences.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the main arguments in the development of Islamic social work practice. As a relatively new profession, Islamic social work, like Islamic psychology or Islamic psychotherapy, belongs to what might be called emerging Islamic practical theology within Islamic studies or at least requires an integrative approach. In this respect, it is helpful to refer to Carrie York al-Karam (2018), who defines Islamic psychology within the framework of the Multilevel Interdisciplinary Paradigm (MIP) which "is a concept in the domain of psychology of religion and spirituality" serving to demonstrate "how to think about complex and multidimensional disciplines, such as Islamic Psychology, that are inherently interdisciplinary." (York Al-Karam, 2018, 101) In respect to Islamic psychotherapy, many authors (Haque & Kamil, 2012; Haque et al. 2016; Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013; Haque & Keshavarzi, 2013; York Al-Karam, 2015, 2018; Rothman, 2018) have suggested applying the Islamic concept of soul or self and using Islamic prayer, *dhikr*, *ruqya*, and other spiritual tools in psychotherapy. In all discussion, Islamic theology is an inevitable part of scholarly debate. Similarly, never before have the prospects of Islamic practical theology and its teaching been so significant, particularly regarding Islamic social work, as we witness the growth of Islamic social services in various Western countries today.

The development of Islamic social work requires the integration of insights from both Islamic practical theology and social sciences. For this to happen, a myriad of questions need to be addressed. For example, how do we integrate Islamic studies into general social work knowledge and practice? How do we provide a solid theological reflection that captures a moment in Islamic social work with clients who question the suffering in their lives? Do we refer them to Islamic psychologists, secular psychologists, imams, etc.? Does Islamic practical theology provide approaches and rhetoric to provide effective Islamic social work? How do Muslim social workers integrate knowledge and wisdom from Islamic practical theology and social sciences in general to interpret human experiences and needs?

In the context of the aforementioned reflections, this chapter addresses the following questions: firstly, what are the best practices for teaching Islamic practical theology that prepare Muslim social work students to connect theological understanding to the everyday experience of Muslims in the community, society and the world? Secondly, how do Muslim social workers use daily life practices as an "epistemic weight" in the production of new knowledge in Islamic social work? Finally, does Islamic practical theology, including Islamic doctrine, tradition, and the "living human document" hold a central position in Islamic social work?

A Brief Outline of Practical Theology

For the sake of clarity, I outline below the context of practical theology. During the twentieth century, many theologians engaged in discussions on the role of practical theology in solving daily life issues. This was one of the main reasons behind the establishment of various ministry practices, such as pastoral care (Couture, 2007, 151–152).

In some countries, the term practical theology is alternatively labeled as "pastoral theology". According to Elaine Graham, pastoral theology is

> The systematic reflection upon the nature of the Church in the world, accessible only through the practical wisdom of those very communities. Therefore, as a discipline, pastoral theology is not legislative or prescriptive, but interpretive. It enables the community of faith to give a critical and public account of its purposeful presence in the world, and of the values that give shape to its actions. (Graham, 2002, 208–209)

In other words, pastoral or practical theology is "more than descriptive and empirical" and holds the potential to be "transformative and transcendent", moving beyond the *normative* (e. g., ethics and prescription) (Miller-McLemore, 2012b, 111).

In Protestant Christian theology, for example, the main understanding of practical theology is usually based on Friedrich Schleiermacher's (d. 1834) view: Schleiermacher suggested that knowledge is bound by experience and plays an important role in understanding, reflecting on and interpreting Christian practice (Gräb, 2012). According to Sally A. Brown, Schleiermacher also raised the idea of the "hermeneutical circle" in which there is an interplay between "grammatical" and "psychological" understandings which produce a new meaning from the text (Brown, 2012).

Gradually, the focus of practical theology shifted from historical and philosophical theology towards a more "fluid dialectic between human situation and religious message" (Miller-McLemore, 2012a, 105). In this respect, David Tracy describes practical theology as the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation (Tracy, 1975, 1981, 1994). Ideally, in the Christian context, practical theology should engage in the following tasks:

1. To be ready for "the dramatic confrontation" that refers to critical understanding and analysis of tradition
2. To suggest "mutual illuminations and corrections" and
3. To offer "the possible basic reconciliation between the principal values, cognitive claims, and existential faiths of both a reinterpreted post-modern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity" (Tracy, 1972, 3).

Tracy's mutually critical correlational method inspired others to develop new models of practical theology. For example, Don Browning (d. 2010) suggested that practical theology should be based on "a critical reflection on the church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation, with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation" (Browning,

1991, 36). Later on, Charles Gerkin (1984) integrated Anton Boisen's (d. 1965) notion of the "living human document" (Boisen, 1960). Boisen suggested that pastoral caregivers must view and practice understanding of a "living human document" as a unique life story in conflict. He noted that the books may help to understand the theories, but human stories must also be studied and interpreted as sacred texts. In the Christian perspective, such pastoral practice is a reading of sin and salvation or of grace and fall (Isgandarova, 2018).

Also, borrowing from Hans-Georg Gadamer (d. 2002), Gerkin suggested developing a practice of pastoral counselling that allows a process of interpretation and reinterpretation of human experience, where God's horizon fuses with human horizons. Within the framework of a Christian model of interpretation, for example, Gerkin states that "practical theology is grounded in narrative (…) rooted in the faith that the Bible provides us with an overarching narrative in which all other narratives of the world are nested." However, human experience is also "the present experience of occasions for faithful adherence to the central metaphorical meanings of the grounding story of human identity" (Gerkin, 1986, 50). Therefore, practical theology "involves a process of the interpretive fusion of horizons of meaning embodied in the Christian narrative with other horizons that inform and shape perceptions in the various arenas of activity in which Christians participate" (Gerkin, 1986, 50). This is an ongoing process of questioning, correcting, refining and integrating (Gerkin, 1984).

Contemporary approaches to practical theology allow for social sciences to be used as a source of information, because both practical theology and social sciences prioritise lived human experience (Couture, 2013; Isgandarova, 2018). This approach is "concerned with praxis and with empirical research, it still operates in terms of certain confessional presuppositions" (Van Wyk, 1995, 91). According to Barbara McClure (2012, 273), this is "theology from the ground of human experience." Such an approach shows the importance of human experience as a primary text for practical theology inquiry, as well as research that allows the development of a new praxis. This kind of praxis involves transformation: in this way, theory offers a critical and reasoned reflection based on various interpretations of practice and challenges the practitioners to act and think in new ways. Thus, practice offers various ways of acting to theory (O'Connor, 1998). It is no wonder that for the Dutch theologian Johannes van der Ven (2002), the concept of praxis requires contribution from "at least 40 disciplines and sub-disciplines such as psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, ethnology and ethology to mathematical, natural and medical sciences" (Van der Ven, 2002, 28).

More recently, Bonnie Miller-McLemore has described practical theology as "a general way of doing theology concerned with the embodiment of religious belief in the day-to-day lives of individuals and communities" (Miller-McLemore, 2012b, 111). It is concerned with the practice of faith and tradition in daily life, how daily life practices gain an "epistemic weight" in the production of new knowledge, and how and where doctrine, tradition, philosophy, and the "living human document" become connected (Isgandarova, 2018). Thus, Christian practical theology is founded on the essentials of Christian faith that guide and motivate its practitioners.

Christian practical theology influences the way Christian faith communities provide various services, including but not limited to, religious, health care and social services for those who need them.

Islamic Practical Theology: What's in the Name?

Islam differs from Christianity in regard to its fundamental tenets of faith. However, like Christianity, Islam also emphasises responsibility and care for one another. The Qurʾanic and Prophetic traditions affirm that the believers should build a strong faith community by helping each other for the betterment of the community, society, and the whole world. In this respect, Islamic values such as charity, kindness, justice, integrity, and support are the basic foundations of Islamic practical theology.

By definition, Islamic practical theology is an emerging discipline that provides a theological reflection on the role of Scripture, and other aspects of the Islamic tradition, including rituals in the lived experience of Muslims. In this respect, Islamic practical theology closely considers the lived experience of faith or how Muslims experience or adapt and change religious or spiritual approaches in daily life. Islamic practical theology is also interested in finding out how the Islamic tradition(s) shape(s) contemporary Islamic practice of theology, and how enquiry into specific ways of life at the grassroots level feeds back into Muslim scholarly traditions of textual interpretation. I call this process a *turn to practice*, which refers to a shift from primarily text-based teaching into studies of the praxis of faith. This is becoming more evident in the practice of Islamic social work along with Islamic psychotherapy and spiritual care.

Recent endeavours in Islamic practical theology follow in the footsteps of previous generations of Muslim scholars such as Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi or Rhazes (864–925), Abu Zayd Ahmed ibn Sahl al-Balkhi (d. 934), Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Farabi or Alpharabius (d. 950), Abu ʿAli al-Husayn ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Sina or Avicenna (d. 1037), Yahya ibn ʿAdi (d. 974), the Brethren of Purity (*Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ*) of the tenth century, Abu ʿAli Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Yaʾqub ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030), the Shiite Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274). For example, since the 1980s, understanding and interpretation of the sacred, using human experience, has laid a foundation for critical reflection on using scientific or social sciences within Islamic studies. Many prominent Muslim scholars such as Fazlur Rahman (1982), Ismaʿil Raji al-Faruqi (1981), Sayyid Waqqar Ahmed Husaini (1981) or Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1982) have explored the past and contemporary conditions of Islamic studies by drawing on adult education, philosophy, sociology, even business, and science, but at the same time employed theological language. Similarly, adopting an innovative approach to the interpretation and application of Islamic tradition in Islamic psychotherapy, social work and psychology has encouraged many Muslim psychologists and psychotherapists to integrate Islamic theology, psychology and psychotherapy (Badri, 2018; Abugideiri, 2012; Haque, 2004; Hamjah & Akhir, 2014; Rizvi, 1989; Rassool,

2016, 2019; Rothman, 2018). Such an approach takes into account that the Qur'anic revelation, from the beginning till the end, addresses everyday aspects of human experiences and activities in relation to the practice of the Islamic faith. This emphasises that God's conversation with prophets was not a linear monologue; rather, the revelation "was circular and systemic, reflecting an active conversation between theory (revelation) and practice (the lived experience)" (Isgandarova, 2018). The tradition of the *asbāb an-nuzūl* (the causes of revelation) provides, as a reference point, the importance of lived experience for comprehending divine orders (Rippin, 1985). Such a divine approach to the human dilemma (i. e., problems in life, and social, financial, spiritual, political problems in our society) encourages Muslim professions not to be indifferent to human needs.

The contemporary approach to Islamic practical theology also calls on social sciences, reflecting the possibility of interdisciplinarity within Islamic practical theology. For example, in my book "Muslim Women, Domestic Violence and Psychotherapy" (Isgandarova, 2018), I argue that theological knowledge depends on the context and human experience and is sensitive to the human dilemma in many ways. Similarly, in Islamic theological studies, such as Qur'anic exegesis, *kalām* (discursive theology), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and Sufism, there is a need for an understanding of the "lived" practice of Islamic theological studies. Such an approach enables Muslim psychotherapists, social workers, psychologists, etc., to address issues of power, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism among Muslims.

Relationship between Islamic Social Work and Islamic Practical Theology

Islamic social work requires stronger theoretical and evidence-based best practices for the future advancement of the profession. According to Vasclo Lub, "A theory used in social work must, in other words, provide integration of acquired knowledge about the relevant mechanisms of action, and conditions for behavioural and social change" (Lub, 2019, 6). For Lub,

> A social work method has a strong theoretical underpinning when it meets the following requirements: (1) the method presents a coherent and explicit vision of what should lead to behavioural and social change; (2) this vision is supported by relevant theoretical notions from the literature; (3) the theories are incorporated into the method in such a way that they logically connect to problem definitions, programme goals and target groups. (Lub, 2019, 7)

For example, in many countries the social work profession is based on the recovery-model which William Anthony (1993) defines as follows:

> A mental health services system that is guided by the recovery vision incorporates the critical services of a community support system, organized around the rehabilitation model's description of the impact of severe mental illness all under the umbrella of the recovery vision. In a recovery-oriented mental health system, each essential service is analysed with respect to its capacity to ameliorate people's impairment, dysfunction, disability, and disadvantage. (Anthony, 1993, 528)

In the Muslim context, Islamic practical theology along with the social sciences can provide theoretical legitimacy to the Islamic social work and allow Muslim social workers to have a stable foundation that integrates faith and practice. For example, in this respect, recovery model from Islamic social work perspective is client-centred as the divine revelation was human-centred and focuses on hope to recover from a mental health condition and social problems. In addition, based on al-Ghazali's concept of human psyche, this kind of recovery work requires a thorough assessment and treatment at four levels: (1) *nafs* (lower self), (2) *qalb* (heart), (3) *ʿaql* (intellect) and (4) *rūḥ* (spirit) (Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013; Skinner, 2010).

Recent research endeavours and inspiring practices suggest that new initiatives in practical theology provide a new approach to teaching and practicing Islamic social work, Islamic psychotherapy, and Islamic psychology. However, we still have to define what Islamic social work refers to. Does it mean, as Abdullahi Barise (2005) has suggested, using insights from the teachings of Islam when working with practicing Muslims? Or is it, as Ibrahim A. Ragab (2016) outlines, a more systemic integration of Islamic religious knowledge with current social work practice theories? From the perspective of Barise, it would be more appropriate to speak of "Islamic philosophy of social work" rather than of Islamic social work. For Ragab, however, Islamic social work practice should be regarded as a subfield of Islamic practical theology. Another crucial issue is whether we could apply Islamic social work when working with non-Muslim clients. The traditional, or more specifically: pre-modern, practices can help us to find answers to these questions. In Islamic practical theology, the roots of social work started with care for the poor, the orphaned, the sick and vulnerable travellers. Later on, Islamic social work was conditioned by the influences of social sciences. In Malaysia, they teach social work education in the context of Islamic studies and social sciences (Ashencaen Crabtree & Baba, 2001). Contemporary Islamic social work practice within Islamic practical theology education is still rather philosophical than "practical". Therefore, it is too early to claim that we have already achieved our goal and established contemporary Islamic social work. When it comes to the practice or application of Islamic practical theology, the Muslim social workers, along with spiritual caregivers and counsellors, feel some inadequacy in their practices. In other words, there is a gap between the lived and the studied; and the understanding of Islamic practical theology is still narrow and parochial.

The growing need for Islamic practical theology in Islamic social work, Islamic psychotherapy, and spiritual care displays a need for moving beyond the traditional understanding of practice and theology in Islamic studies by taking into account the importance of lived experience and praxis. This approach to Islamic practical theology education will make it more advanced and broader, going beyond the textual approach to practical theology.

Due to its integrative approach, Islamic practical theology can enrich Islamic social work education and practice. For example, in Ontario, Canada, along with developing social security and welfare provisions in the Muslim communities, Muslim social workers also provide counselling and psychotherapy from an Islamic perspective. Muslim social workers can learn from the experience of some Muslim

spiritual caregivers and psychotherapists who started to apply the understanding of a "living human document" as suggested by Boisen (1960). The term "living human document" does not refer to any specific theological notion. However, by applying this term, Boisen simply invited practical theologians to attend to human life the way they attend to the written documents of faith like Scripture (O'Connor, 1998, 112).

The application of the concept of the "living human document" requires a creative approach to clients' narratives specifically from the Islamic tradition perspective in order to address clients' needs as well as to empower them as required by general social work practice. Here I argue that the literature may help to understand the theories, but human stories must also be studied and interpreted as sacred texts. In this respect, Hans-Georg Gadamer's (2004) metholdogy suggests interpreting the individual who comes for counselling and care as a "living human document" who must be seen from various "horizons", including religious tradition, psychological theory, and counselling interventions. Gadamer suggests that the truth is hidden within word meaning and comes to the surface when a human being becomes aware of himself or herself located temporally in the context (Isgandarova, 2018). Such interaction is the heart of healing through social justice, advocacy and empowerment that Muslim social workers need to integrate into their theoretical and clinical knowledge.

From the Christian practical theology perspective, healing through social justice, advocacy and empowerment are practiced through a reading of sin and salvation or fall and grace. From the Islamic practical theology perspective, these goals are achieved through the Qurʾan's radically egalitarian epistemology. In the Muslim context, on the one hand, the principle of *tawḥīd* (oneness and unity of God) recognises that the origin of all is one. On the other hand, the principle of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) encourages liberation from evil, or from the destructive forces of trauma, and emphasises the re-establishment of personal communication with the Creator, self, others, and nature. Such a reading of the living human document means acceptance, forgivingness, and purification of the soul. This is the process of contributing to human development and spiritual maturity by helping clients achieve the moment of enlightenment (VanKatwyk, 2003).

When doing so, Muslim social workers should consider the notion that social justice should be placed at the heart of the Islamic social work, similar to the mission of the Prophet Muhammad, who was the voice of the marginalised groups. The Qurʾan explicitly urges believers to be mindful of mutual rights. For James E. Jones, "this is a call to justice" (Jones, 2014). Also, as Asma Barlas (2002, 96) notes, the belief in oneness in God "makes for a just and coherent moral universe" and encourages not to commit *zulm* (injustice) to anybody. Moreover, the Qurʾan on many occasions call for *ʿadl* (justice), *qisṭ* (righteousness or justice in social relations) and *mīzān* (balance or measure), especially in regard to women, orphans, poor, the travellers and other vulnerable social groups. Furthermore, the concept of *al-maṣlaḥa* (social well-being or the common good) requires the commitment of social work to the improvement of quality of life and freedom of aforementioned social groups.

Accomazzo, Moore and Sirojudin further elaborate the notion of *al-maṣlaḥa*. They state that,

> The basic necessity is called *aḍ-ḍarūriya* and includes mental, spiritual, and material well-being: personal mental health, the security of the family (including elders and youngsters), the security of possessions and wealth, personal safety and life, and the safety of one's beliefs. The second type of social well-being in Islamic tradition is called *ḥājiyyāt*, namely, the improvement of the quality of life beyond necessity. Individuals are allowed to improve their lives both spiritually and materially. Finally, the third type of social well-being is called *taḥsīniyyāt* and denotes the opportunity and the freedom for individuals to enjoy the best quality of life, including possessing luxurious good and abundant wealth. (Accomazzo et al., 2013, 77)

In this respect, the Islamic social work practice should look for ways to assess and help people in need through the perspective of the living human document in Islamic practical theology. According to P. VanKatwyk (2008) the perspective of the living human document helps to reveal the truth by providing a different outside perspective. The Muslim social worker then has to help the clients see their problem from a new perspective and then transcend it through creative imagination or theological reflection. For Boisen, it starts with "don't be afraid to tell." In Islamic spiritual care practice, for example, Muslim spiritual and religious caregivers use this perspective to encourage the patient or client to allow them to read their life story. In this regard, a great source of inspiration in Islamic social work practice is the Islamic narrative of the Surah of *al-ʿalaq* (The Clot) or *ʾiqraʾ* (Read):

> Recite in the Name of Your Lord, Who created. He created the human being from a clot. Your Lord is the Most Generous Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what human being knows not. (Q 96:1–5)[1]

Similarly, in Islamic social work practice, Muslim social workers can explore particular psychosocial and theological issues and provide an analysis of the situation from Islamic practical theology and social science perspectives. They can approach the central problem or issue in the client's stories by engaging a four-step process: (1) understanding the problem, (2) gathering information, (3) understanding the information, and (4) coping with the problem (Isgandarova, 2018). Similarly to Islamic psychotherapy practice, especially clinical Muslim social workers can provide interventions that address the "diagnosis," drawing upon sources from Sharʿia, Islamic theology, Sufism, and contemporary counselling theories, as well as resources from within the Muslim family and the community. For example, in case of domestic violence, the difficult questions raised by Muslim women who are victims of domestic violence cannot be answered using only social sciences. These questions related to the Qurʾan's teaching about domestic violence, the classical and contemporary Islamic traditions (like Sufi counselling), and current counselling theories and practices approach to the controversial aspects of counselling with women who were/are victims of domestic violence can only be understood within the framework of Islamic tradition.

[1] The translation of the Qurʾan is the author's own.

Meanwhile, when Muslim social workers use Islamic practical theology they should also address the following questions as outlined by Michael J. Austin, Christina Branom and Bryn King:

1. To what extent does the search for meaning in one's life include engaging in the struggles for social justice?
2. How does one's religious faith or secular beliefs (humanistic values and ethics) inform one's social justice commitments to the survival and development of all people?
3. How does the blending of the scholarly logic (historical and philosophical) associated with *understanding* social justice combine with one's personal commitment to *promote* social justice?
4. If we are all part of "the problem" (both agent and recipient of exploitation and oppression), how do we become part of "the solution" by promoting social justice?
5. To what extent does the transformation of consciousness related to human relations, personal behaviour, lifestyles, and professional practices call for self-transformation?
6. How does one's newly acquired understandings of social justice inform efforts to make the transition from focusing on the symptoms of social injustice to identifying and addressing the underlying causes of injustice related to exploitation and oppression? (Austin et al., 2013, 2)

Such an approach to Islamic social work suggests that social work is not only about Islam. We have to consider the fact that Islam is very general and broad when we consider the old and existing Muslim theological schools, sects, traditional and contemporary sources, etc. Similarly, the scope of social work is broad and has subdisciplines that include but are not limited to community, clinical, school social work. The questions above provide a conceptual guideline that make Islamic social work operational and look different from other subdisciplines such as Islamic psychology and psychotherapy.

Conclusion

Muslim social workers are attempting to select certain theories and methods as a solid foundation for Islamic social work practice. We do not have an evidence-based theory that suggests if Islamic practical theology can be relevant in Islamic social work practice. However, the implementation of the principles of Islamic pratical theology seems to have been effective in Islamic psychotherapy and spiritual care practices. Drawing on these experiences, this paper suggests that Islamic practical theology can provide effective guidelines for an Islamic social work. However, as we observe in other fields, it would be an overreach to expect that Islamic practical theology provide ready-made recipes. It rather inspires clinical wisdom to check the fit of theory into the practice.

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Islam, Social Work and Common Good in the Muslim Minority Context of Europe: Rethinking Shariʿa as Relational Ethics

Abdullah Sahin

Abstract This chapter explores the interface between Islam, social work and the common good within the Muslim minority context of Europe. The ethics-law nexus in Muslim tradition is examined to argue for a transformative Islamic engagement with the secular public space. Literature on Islam and social work is limited to providing basic information about Islam to frontline practitioners. The current inquiry intends to develop an Islamic perspective on social work and wellbeing. Increasing association of Muslims with extremism form negative public perceptions of Islam in Europe. Within this discourse of suspicion, Islam is coded as a cause of public harm and 'Shariʿa law' is often associated with human rights violations. This study argues that a critical dialogue among the faith-embedded and secular traditions of social ethics in Europe remains vital to fostering a shared sense of common good. Contemporary discussions on social ethics in Islam are dominated by *maqāṣid ash-sharīʿa* (objectives of Islamic law) and *fiqh al-ʿaqalliyyāt* (Muslim minority law). Whilst the former is purported to be a metaethical discourse and the latter implying a contextualising intent, both operate within strict juristic hermeneutics. Alternatively, this inquiry rethinks Shariʿa as relational ethics and practical wisdom (*ḥikma*), closer to the concept of *phronesis* in ancient Greek philosophy, guiding human relations as imagined in Qurʾanic anthropology and its vision of a just society. Shariʿa is framed within Islam's transformative view of human flourishing, *tarbiyya*. The notion of relational ethics is further grounded in dialogue with phenomenology-informed discussions on ethics, particularly in the work of Levinas, and Habermas's 'theory of communicative action'.

Keywords European Islam · Shariʿa · Relational ethics · Social work · Common good · Transformative education · Phenomenology · Levinas

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Introduction: Context, Questions and Methodology of the Inquiry

This chapter explores the interface between Islam, social work and the common good within the Muslim minority context of Europe. The ethics-law nexus in Muslim tradition is reconsidered with the view of generating a transformative Islamic engagement with the secular public space in modern multicultural European societies. The discussion is grounded in the Islamic values of relational ethics embodied in the concept of Shariʿa, applied wisdom ethics where Islam's moral teachings are brought to bear on a range of real-world practical concerns. The idea of the public sphere in democratic societies assumes citizens actively involved in a decision-making process that facilitates the ethical pursuit of the common good. Social work, education, community cohesion and wellbeing are central to generating the public good.

There are challenges related to the post-World War II Muslim presence in Europe and the difficulties in defining common good in modern European societies where religion is often considered a private affair. Furthermore, there are diverse settlement models of the separation of Church and the state in Europe which inform how 'public Islam' is regulated. Questions concerning the compatibility of Islam with secularity and facilitating a settlement model between Islam and European states are explored in a separate study (Sahin, 2011). The main argument of the present inquiry builds on the previous studies, examining the role of religion and education in contributing to the common good and social cohesion in contemporary Europe (Sahin, 2010, 2018).

This study's problematic is framed around wider questions about 'public Islam' in European societies: (a) how do secular democratic states manage the public visibility of Islam and accommodate the faith-based needs of their Muslim citizens?; (b) to what extent do Muslims, most of whom exhibit transnational identities and share a sense of belonging to the worldwide Muslim community, *ʾumma,* remain open to relating positively to the wider cultural/religious plurality of European societies? (c) does Islamic activism exploit public spaces (i. e., education, social work, chaplaincy and charity work) as sites for its missionary activities (*daʿwa*) or contribute to the common good and welfare for all?

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the 7/7 London bombings, the faith dimension within the ethnically and culturally diverse Muslim communities in Europe has gained more recognition. The challenge of public Islam in European societies is exemplified by discussions on Islamic extremism, Shariʿa law, state-funded Islamic schooling and Islamic sociopolitical activism (Martensson, 2014). This has led to the need for secular professionals such as social workers, who frequently engage with communities, to learn about the beliefs and practices of Muslims. There is a small body of literature which provides social work practitioners with information on Islam. This helps towards understanding the family values, youth problems and subcultures, mental health, wellbeing and social needs in the European Muslim diaspora (Barise, 2005; Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2017;

Hodge, 2005; Ragab, 2016; Joshanloo, 2017). This literature is informative yet has worrying limitations. It does not contextualise Islamic social work and the concept of wellbeing within Muslim tradition or in the reality of European Muslim communities. The current study aims to fill this lacuna within the existing literature.

The inquiry employs a cross-disciplinary methodology that draws on theology and wider philosophical, social scientific study of ethics represented in the works of Husserl (2017), Levinas (1990, 1998, 1999) and Habermas (1984, 1990). Hull (2006) argued that in modern plural societies peaceful coexistence can emerge if worldviews, including religions, are willing to show a degree of 'self-relativisation', which helps to avoid being trapped in absolutism, leading to fanaticism and even violence. This is a form of self-contextualisation close to Husserl's phenomenological method of "bracketing" one's perception of the world in order to "transcend" its limitations and be *emphatically* open to the other (Husserl, 2017). In such a contextual dialogue, worldviews could still retain their distinctiveness while maintaining relevance in the modern world. Communities experience social inequalities across intersecting identity categories, such as gender, race, class and faith, all of which are also subject to internal debate, conflict and negotiations. Addressing such inequalities requires critical reflection on one's identity and the recognition of its limitations. This can further cultivate the virtue of 'epistemic humility', which can be traced back to the humility theory of wisdom attributed to Socrates (Whitcomb, 2011). Hull's concept of self-relativisation and transcendence leads to the condition of being 'critically open to the other' and is argued to be compatible with the Islamic educational principle of *taʿāruf* (learning from one another) (Sahin, 2014).

The concepts of social and public theology are closely related to the notion of political theology in terms of engaging with issues around social justice. However, the latter implies a more direct engagement with governmental policies, whereas the former's concern is with the affairs of civil society and how to nurture values of trust, respect and solidarity within communities to promote the common good. Islamic social work, like Islamic education, is a field of practical theology that has a strong empirical dimension, where conducting interdisciplinary social science research will enrich the theological thinking. Theological reflection can be grounded in this specific area of practice where it mediates Islamic values in daily life and, in turn, theology becomes shaped by practical encounters, a process which can facilitate indigenous articulations of Islam in Europe. A contextual model of practical Islamic theology is suggested by Sahin (2014, 2018, 2019), originally developed through responding to the educational and identity needs of British Muslim youth. Too often, Muslim faith leaders use text-centred normative legal hermeneutics (*fiqh*) or speculative and defensive theology (*kalām*), where the contextual reality is considered as secondary. This inquiry argues that invoking the notion of relational ethics might facilitate a gradual shift from the dominance of text-centredness towards a better recognition of how texts are interpreted within the lived reality of communities and how they relate to wider society. Such experiential hermeneutics might inspire new models of practical Islamic theologies, capable of guiding practitioners in the applied fields of education and social work.

Religion, like the rest of human experience, is not free from ambiguity. As a powerful source of identity, religion can give rise to conflict, particularly when it enjoys political power and when religious identity disintegrates. Today, much of the violence committed in the name of Islam can partially be attributed to the reality of insecure Islamic identities seeking to retrieve long-lost imperial power and dignity in the face of daily experienced helplessness. The claim propagated chiefly by Orientalists like B. Lewis (1990) that Islam presents an *exceptionally* violence-prone religious culture has not been supported by empirical studies (Mabry, 2015; Fish, 2011). Contemporary Muslim societies have failed to nurture a democratic culture but there appears to be no fundamental difference between autocrats in Muslim states and those in non-Muslim states.

Religion can also be a powerful humanising force. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that religious affiliation has consistently predicted higher scores on measures of prosociality, altruism and public service (Neusner & Chilton, 2005). The latest psychological and sociological literature continues to demonstrate the social relevance of religion in contemporary western societies (Francis & Ziebertz, 2011; Trigg, 2008). The once taken-for-granted theory that equated modernisation with inevitable secularisation has long lost its empirical appeal (Berking et al., 2018). As Berger (2014) argues, increasing social pluralisation expressed as a diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews has been unfolding. The presence of religious communities in large European cities is being recognised as pointing towards a new urban, post-secular social condition (Nynäs et al., 2012), an observation first made by J. Habermas (2008). However, there are also renewed debates over whether 'public religion' can limit itself to social volunteerism contributing to the common good or harm in resisting plurality and liberal values of modern Europe where religion, especially Islam, has already been associated with violence and extremism.

The Common Good in Culturally and Religiously Plural European Societies

The European Enlightenment, part of overcoming centuries old European intra-religious warfare which ended with the famous Peace of Westphalia in 1684, promoted the value of tolerance, in an effort to contain sectarian conflict and ensure the freedom to practise religion, as well as freedom from religion, within its broader narrative of secular modernity. The value of tolerance was powerful enough to lay the foundations for new European constitutions (Classen, 2018). However, as Hollenbach (2002) argues, the notion of common good implies dimensions of mutual respect, trust and, above all else, interrelatedness, that are not present in the notion of tolerance. Serving the common good requires communities to develop enough mutual trust to share a vision of a good society. Habermas' theory of 'communicative action' argues that the public sphere in democratic societies is where individuals and groups, representing diverse worldviews, can come together to

freely discuss common problems. Faith communities, like other interest clusters, might put aside their theological differences and join forces to act as unified, civic pressure groups. Through such inclusive discussions, related to the practical realities of everyday life, and living together they can produce political action for the common good.

Habermas' theory is rooted in the progressive values of the European Enlightenment and adopts Marxian features. As such, it is often argued (Bowen, 2016) that while the theory accommodates religion(s) in the secular public space, it also expects them to *translate* their traditional self-understandings into a universalist liberal language of intelligibility. This can be seen as an implicit secularisation demand, if not an unconscious Eurocentric bias. However, Habermas argues that mutual trust and understanding(s) emerge out of communities' everyday practical interactions, requiring them to go beyond their particular identity politics in favour of preserving the common good. Habermas's theory is based on the belief that the human capacity for rationality can facilitate intersubjective communication; an occasion for "ideal speech", debate and dialogue in arriving at consensus(es) for taking collective actions to promote social justice. Habermas locates rationality as a capacity inherent within language, especially in the form of public debates expressing views on issues that concern the wider public. His conception of rationality goes beyond the confines of an instrumentalist scientific rationalism. It is framed as an expression of the human communicative power of language, which reflects what ancient philosophers called rhetoric, the art of persuasion, facilitating relational good and practical refinement or wisdom (*phronesis*), recognised in classical Muslim education as *balāgha* and *ḥikma*, competence for eloquent, intelligent speech and conduct.

The exclusion of minority voices in the public sphere and the inequalities they experience are recognised as a challenge in Habermas' theory. A life with dignity requires recognition for one's contribution to socially shared goals and one's equal status within the society. As far as Europe's minority faith communities are concerned, the forces of mistrust can be traced back to the aftermath of War World II. The early twentieth century mass population movements have occurred as a natural outcome of the workforce needs of a rapidly expanding global capitalist market. European powers mostly turned to their ex-colonies to fill the labour shortage. However, migration has gradually gained a 'racial, cultural and religious turn', going well beyond its initial economic focus. This has led to sociopolitical discontent in the so-called host societies, often expressed as racial and religious exclusion. Minorities have begun to experience life in what can be described as a perceptual state of liminality (Turner, 1974) i. e., anxiety, ambiguity and disorientation. A *synchronic* analysis reveals the dynamics of a specific historical period, such as the post-war migration and settlement of Muslim communities in Western Europe or the painful memories of European colonialism, behind the emergence of such an experience of liminality (Pugh, 2019). A more *diachronic* analysis, revealing how inequalities experienced across minority communities have, over time, gained a systemic character, is needed to fully understand the impact of the persisting racial and religious marginalisation in contemporary Europe. More recently, the

mismanagement of migration from newly admitted EU member states and the economic recession of 2008 have triggered a wave of new nationalist populism formed around the 'othering' of migrants, particularly Muslims, who are increasingly stereotyped as 'Islamists' holding an intransigent political ideology (Islam) that needs policing (Abbas, 2018). For Example, the UK Prevent legislation has been expanded to traditionally non-security areas such as child-protection, family law and education (Ahdash, 2020). European security policies continue to focus more on Islamic radicalism and less on far-right extremism.

Relational Ethics and a Convergent View of the Common Good

Human autonomy, literally self-rule, remains a critical issue in contemporary philosophical discussions on moral agency. The perception of autonomy as the rational capacity of self-mastery, symbolised by the philosophies of Descartes and Kant, is often criticised as a male-coded concept shaped by the atomistic, rights-bearing privileged "white" European individuals (Oshana, 2006). The notion of relational autonomy has been proposed (Mackenzie, 2019) as an alternative, stressing that persons are socially-embedded beings with intersecting identity markers of gender, ethnicity, class and religion. In phenomenological tradition, human autonomy is perceived as an embodied agency articulated out of a world of *relatedness* to a body and a contextual, intersubjective processes of unfolding. Phenomenologically considered, ethical agency emerges out of this relational and dialogical character of human existence and a moral demand intrinsic to other persons (Ricoeur, 1992; Smith, 2012; Mensch, 2003).

The lived reality of communities in a racially, culturally and religiously plural Europe points towards a moral dissonance in meeting liberal ideals. This is not to invoke Humean moral scepticism, but contemporary plural societies present an ethical dilemma which calls into question how diverse communities find recognition, experience respect and develop a sense of belonging in secular multicultural societies. A rigid interpretation of the secular, *secularism,* could imply an exclusivist perspective that struggles to deal with diversity and to facilitate a fair common ground in public space. Such a position may even deem religions to be irrelevant in public life. There is also a tension between promoting individual flourishing and protecting the social common good in secular polities, where a sharp distinction between the private and public realms of life is often observed. Rawls (2001) argued that the pluralism of contemporary Western secular societies makes it impossible to envision a social good on which all can agree. Rawls does not seem to consider that the everyday practical reality of a shared social life can naturally generate knowledge of the common good.

MacIntyre (1994, 2007) draws attention to the fact that post-enlightenment Western moral philosophy has roots in the discussions on 'good life' which originated in ancient Greek philosophy, at the expense of ignoring Europe's faith-based

ethical traditions. MacIntyre, by adopting neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, suggests returning to a narrative-shaped tradition theory of morality, illustrated by Christian virtue ethics. Aristotle argued in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1976) that a good life is one devoted to the pursuit of good purposes. A good life is also oriented toward goods shared with others. Virtue (*arete*, excellence or fulfilment) was perceived as a habitual disposition to do good. The practice of virtue and wisdom (*phronesis*) has a relational goal (*telos)*. In Plato's dialogues (Cooper, 1997), Socrates is depicted arguing for the need to turn guardians into the future rulers of the city, through a complex system of education to form their character so that they serve the common good as if it were their very own. For him, the real goal was to establish an ordered, just regime within oneself first. Socratic education is not just meant to educate civic rulers, but also to educate humans to be excellent rulers of themselves within a just society where the common good is served. This practical virtue ethics of "moderation, courage, wisdom and justice" shaped medieval moral thought, including Muslim thinkers' perspectives on ethics.

For example, the ancient Greek idea of *eudaimonia* (happiness, human flourishing, prosperity) was formed around an individual sense of goodness (Lafollette, 2014). Naturally, the religious *eudaimonia* focused on active participation in a life of community. Muslim philosophical schools, and to some extent theological traditions, as part of their critical reception of ancient Greek thought, developed an Islamic view of *eudaimonia*. Al-Farabi (d. 850) in his Attainment of Happiness (*taḥṣīl al-saʿāda*), modelled on the Republic of Plato, promotes political moderation in a time of sociopolitical and sectarian conflicts and argues for the need to form a virtuous society where the common good is served (Parens, 2006). Al-Farabi's work (1995) seeks to educate young and politically ambitious Muslims to temper their desire to spread the truths of Islam through a jihad of military expansionism, by pursuing a jihad of truth spreading and living by the truth. For him, seeking happiness (*saʿāda*) is linked with the pursuit of the common good and achieving a virtuous society (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*). Similarly, friendship was a favourite theme within the humanistic (*insāniyya*) discourse of the Muslim philosophers and theologians such as Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030) and Abu Hayyan al-Tahwdi (d. 1023). The latter wrote a distinctive work on friendship (*ukhuwwa*), rearticulating the Aristotelian concept of *philia* (friendship) within a wider Islamic perception of the human self and the other. Ancient Greek and Persian moral thought had a profound impact on Muslim ethical traditions. It is important to note that classical Islamic works on ethics, like their inherited Greek and Persian counterparts, often exclude women and assume the moral subject to be an elite male.

The Islamic tradition preserved the Greek idea of *eudaimonia* but often gave it a distinctive Islamic idiom by using Qurʾanic ethical vocabulary such as *faḍl,* divine grace, and *iḥsān*, excellence, kindness, generosity and *ʿadl*, justice. However, women appear to be excluded from this Qurʾanic egalitarian ethics. Al-Isfahani (d. 1108), whose work (1985, 116–118) will shortly be discussed, suggested limitations in female moral agency as "the social status of women require exhibiting an inferior version of the virtues which reach their peak in man (*muruwwa*/manliness)". He immediately recognises this contradicts the Qurʾan's gender inclusive

notion of humanity and its egalitarian moral ethos (Q 49:13)[1] and tries, rather unconvincingly, to justify his apparently self-contradictory position on the issue. The pursual of a good life in Islam is also tied to fulfilling one's obligation (*taklīf*) which is rooted in a novel juridical concept i. e., the rights that humans and God possess (*ḥuqūq Allah*/*ʿibād*). This legalistic rights approach, prioritising the value of justice was given a moral sense by promoting virtue as self-care (*tazkiyya*/*riʿāya*). Overall, a more personalist and relational perception of human moral agency seems well-founded in Muslim core sources (Al-Halbabi, 1969). The prophetic traditions emphasise the significance of personal intentions (*niyya*) in human conduct and cultivating a sense of personal moral autonomy and responsibility. When asked to define "goodness and sin" the prophet was reported to have simply said "search your hearts rather than seek a legal opinion (*fatwā*)", highlighting the significance of personal moral consciousness in human life.

It is often assumed that there is no exact cognate for ethics in the Islamic intellectual tradition (Bucar, 2018). The legal concept of *fiqh* is suggested as exhibiting moral connotations, as it regulates human behaviours. Some do mention that moral issues are dealt with in the domains of *akhlāq* (morals), *taṣawwuf* (spirituality), *falsafa* (philosophy), *kalām* (speculative theology) and *adab* (etiquette). Nearly all ignore approaching Shariʿa as source of Muslim ethics. The interpretation of Shariʿa as law, the Divine commandments backed by the threat of punishment, has led to an assumption that it promotes a simple transactional ethics of reward and punishment.

Even the depiction of God in the Qurʾan could be perceived as a fearful judge. An original study (Rahbar, 1960) exploring the principal motive of good conduct in the Qurʾan, argues that the Qurʾanic God can best be described as God of Justice. The Qurʾan upholds the human capacity for freedom as evident in its formulae of connecting faithfulness with doing good (*ʾāmanū wa ʿamilū aṣ-ṣāliḥāt*) (Hourani, 1985). An early human freedom-centred Islamic ethics is exemplified by the *muʿtazila*, a rationalist school of Islamic theology that flourished during the eighth to tenth centuries. *Muʿtazila* theologians showed tendencies of ethical objectivism and a natural law perspective that are justified by appealing to God's creation of a good, beneficial world. They argued that the natural value of justice needed to be observed by God and humans equally. However, in Rahbar's (1960) exceptionally rigorous study, God emerges as a stern, legally-minded deity who does not act arbitrarily but is incapable of love and intimacy with humanity. The study overlooks the moral qualities embedded in God's names (*al-ʾasmāʾ al-ḥusnā*) and the ethics of mutual recognition and care informing the Divine-human relations revealed by the central description of God in the Qurʾan as *al-Rabb*; the Educator, Nourisher and Guide *par excellence*. A key ethical concept of the Qurʾan, *taqwā*, is erroneously associated in this work with a fear of God rather than with the moral awareness of self, others and the Divine (Rahman, 1983).

Asad (1986) invoked the notion of 'tradition' *à la* MacIntyre to deconstruct perceptions of Islam within secular modernity. Asad advises western anthropologists to

[1] All translations of the Qurʾan are the author's own.

take the idea of tradition, or more accurately, "discursive tradition", seriously when studying Islam. He tries to overcome the "essentialist" and "nominalist" dichotomy in defining Islam and argues that a practice becomes Islamic because it is authorised by the discursive traditions of Islam and backed up by shared communal practices. He does not elaborate but, as will be discussed shortly, early Islamic epistemology, before the encounter with Hellenistic thought, was shaped by dynamic, contextual hermeneutics, where textual authority was mediated through sound reason (*ijtihād*), consensus building (*ijmaʿ*), customs (*ʿurf*), and taking into account the needs of a changing society (*istiṣlaḥ*). Such an open-ended interpretative epistemology leaves ample room for new contextual expressions of being Muslim to emerge from a dynamic living tradition.

Asad and MacIntyre seem to show a conservative reactionary attitude to secular modernity. Appealing to the notion of tradition can increase self-confidence among faith communities, but it does not necessarily empower them to engage and to be part of a common good formed within the diversity of modern world. Today, the increasing presence of religion in the public sphere requires religious communities to reflect upon their normative religious structures and not simply to insist on their mere preservation, if an open dialogue with the wider society is to be possible (Casanova, 1994). Public religions, including Islam in secular polity, are better served if they bring their moral teachings to bear on issues of civic space and contribute to the emergence of an inclusive common good.

What Is Relational Ethics?

Ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that explores what constitutes right or wrong, virtue or vice. It is closely related to discussions of axiology and aesthetics, as well as to moral psychology and theoretical discussions on values. The terms ethics and moral philosophy can be understood differently. Ethics, particularly in Aristotelian sense, refer to a teleological concern i. e., character formation and good life, while morality may mean obligations and norms governing actions. The study of ethics is usually carried out in three distinctive aspects: meta-ethics, where truth in moral propositions is examined; normative ethics, related to the principles of ethical decision making; and applied ethics, which is concerned with the application of moral values in life. The most common ethical theories are consequentialist, deontological and virtue-based theories. A consequentialist theory suggests that an action is morally permissible if it maximises overall goodness. Consequentialist theories are specified according to what they take to be intrinsically good. For example, classical utilitarianism considered intrinsic goodness to be happiness and pleasure (Lafollette, 2014). In the deontological perspective, associated with Kant, the emphasis is placed on individual duty. Kant argued that dignity is a kind of intrinsic worth inherent in rational individuals who set their goals according to certain universal maxims. Thus, acting rightly requires being

motivated by universal principles that treat everyone with respect. The divine command theory is considered deontological, in that an action is right if God has decreed it.

The concept of relational ethics, proposed in this inquiry, is grounded in the relational and dialogical nature of human existence discussed above. The moral obligation resides in the call to respond to the relationality defining the human condition. An influential form of a relational ethics where moral normativity is grounded in the ethical demand of the other is offered by E. Levinas. Levinas' (1979, 1990) ethical theory originates in a critical dialogue with phenomenology and his faith heritage, Judaism. Levinas's thinking is couched in phenomenological method and integrates rabbinic exegetical-interpretative features. Levinas, after breaking away from Heidegger and his phenomenology of Being, which Levinas once admired, identified ethics to be the foremost concern of philosophy rather than epistemology or metaphysics. The phenomenological reflection in the early works of Husserl on ethics was dominated by axiological discussions and acts of feeling, where objects are assigned values as likes and dislikes. Husserl later moved towards examining the intersubjective and social aspects of moral life (life-world) (Drummond & Embree, 2002). However, Levinas is the chief figure in advancing a phenomenological analysis that grounds ethics in the obligating presence of the "other". The other symbolises the phenomenological feeling of an ethical relationship. He developed a philosophy of subjectivity, paradoxically defined within the framework of responsibility for the other. His work challenges philosophies that seek to "totalise" (reduce) otherness into sameness, by apportioning difference into pre-established characteristics, properties, and categories. Levinas shows how the 'infinite' can be interpreted as involved in "finity" but without becoming "finity" (objectified). He draws on the metaphors of the human-divine encounter depicted in the Hebrew Bible, which overwhelms the human thinking faculty and reveals fundamental human fragility and limitations. The encounter with a human "other", is likened to the spiritual encounter with the "Divine Other". He argues that when the self is true to itself, it is nothing but a response to the other.

Levinas engaged with Jewish sources through a series of Talmudic readings, combining the insights of western philosophy with rabbinic interpretive methods. His hermeneutic strategy takes the textual legacy of his faith tradition and contemporary intellectual discourses seriously. The aim of exegesis is to extract the universal from the apparent particularism of the tradition. In Levinas' relational ethics, the concept of "alterity" (otherness) plays a significant role. Alterity does not refer to mere difference or otherness, but to an irreducible sense of singularity and subjectivity that needs to be recognised and responded to. Levinas' perception of singularity lies in his understanding of transcendence, which reflects his critical engagement with Husserlian phenomenology. The transcendence of the other does include an embodied, worldly, immanent presence. This opening of transcendence within the immanence of being makes possible a relationship with the other which is not reducible to an objectification. Paradoxically, it becomes a "relationship without relation", in which the other is greeted or received without becoming assimilated into known categories. This points towards an ethics of hospitality in which

intra-human relations such as education and social work become humane and empowering. Welcoming the other as oneself facilitates a natural pedagogic desire to learn from the other (Todd, 2008), which in Muslim education is expressed by the concept *taʿāruf*, "openness to learning from one another" (Sahin, 2017).

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas (1999) argues that the concept of responsibility is not based on a demand for ethical justification issued once and for all, but a continually renewed covenant in living encounters with every stranger. Levinas uses the symbol of the "face of the other" to illustrate the other's resistance to comprehension and assimilation. In the Hebrew Bible, 'face' represents the presence of God (Isaiah 63:9), a depiction also found frequently in the Qurʾan (Q 18:28). The face cannot be described or represented (objectified), since it is not a phenomenon with particular qualities, but rather depicted as a *horizon*, where relations become meaningful. Face is not a mere abstraction or mystical apparition but symbolises a deeper ethical recognition of living in the presence of an irreducible other. The face is discursive more than visual; it commands the individual to respond to the call from the other.

However, Levinas' philosophy may come across as inherently apolitical and quasi-mystical (Wolin, 2008). The question of the political is seen as consistently troubling Levinas's thought (Caygill, 2002; Critchley, 1999). There is always a tension between ethics and politics in a world where violence against the other, or by the other, remains a reality. The other can cause injustice and commit the violence of 'othering' by marginalising people unlike her or him. The real task is how to establish an ethical awareness that is capable of upholding dignity and holiness in the humanity of one's vulnerable neighbour. Relational ethics requires replacing tribal self-understandings shaped by mutually exclusive in- and out-group selfish interests with a willingness to be 'critically faithful' (Sahin, 2017) to one's identity, so that injustice caused by one's own self or community to other(s) can be acknowledged and addressed. Levinas insists that responsibility pre-supposes response. The real ethical danger is not where responsibility is rejected in scepticism but where it is ignored in an apathy of moral blindness (Perpich, 2008). In his Talmudic reflections, Levinas (1990) considers the experience of the Exodus, led by Moses to the Promised Land, which turned into a nightmare of 40 years of desperate wandering in the desert. It appears that Moses' followers decided to enter the land with violence and without respect for the native population living there, naively assuming the unconditional approval of God for their invasion of the other's homeland. They even started to deviate from the Divine commandment to worship God alone (the Golden Calf episode) and to observe justice. As a consequence of their transgression, the Israelites, God's 'treasured people', were no longer 'permitted' to enter the 'promised' land until they reflected on their wrong doings and changed themselves.

Islam and Judaism are often considered as religions of law. However, scholars suggest that Judaism in its biblical stage did not seem to have been a law-based tradition. J. Kugel (2007) points out that the great figures of Judaism, Abraham and Moses, are not depicted in the Bible as observing any law or ritual. Furthermore, it appears that the origins of the Mosaic covenant reflect the structure of the suzerainty treaties of the ancient world agreed between a powerful state and its smaller vassal

states. The concept of humans being created in the image of God (*imago dei*) in the Bible, which does not occur in the Qurʾan, appears as such to be a borrowed metaphor from the widely circulated ancient political culture in Mesopotamia, where kings were often depicted in the images of their deities. It is possible that the Qurʾanic depiction of human distinctiveness with the word *khalīfa/khalāʾif*, God's representatives and stewardship on earth (Q 2:34), has roots in the imperial imagination of the Near East. In the Hebrew Bible, God demands that Israel be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). Kugel argues that a significant implication of being a holy nation was that all people needed to observe the rituals and commandments of God. In Christianity, law was superseded by Divine love. Paul saw law as having the function of pedagogues (not to be confused with today's use of the word as teachers), who in antiquity were usually slaves and looked after children (Young, 1987). With the arrival of Christ, Paul argued there was no longer a need for a primitive protective measure such as law. In Muslim tradition, Shariʿa integrates law, ethics and spirituality. Bearing the knowledge of Shariʿa is not intended to be merely having legal expertise but embodying moral, spiritual authority and guidance.

Shariʿa as Relational Ethics

The word Shariʿa in Arabic refers to a path that leads to a spring vital for human survival. Its frequent use in the Qurʾan would have immediately attracted the attention of seventh century Arabs familiar with desert life. Such a pedagogic use of language is a significant aspect of the Qurʾan's rhetorical discourse, deliberately employed to provoke human imagination. Similarly, the evidence-based thinking in the Qurʾan is expressed with the word *istinbāṭ* – literally searching for water i. e. evidence (Q 4:83). As a technical religious concept in the Qurʾan, Shariʿa symbolises a pattern of meaning humans need to form around certain core values for life (i. e. ethics) (Q 42:13). Shariʿa secondarily refers to rules and regulations (Q 5:48) recognised as *fiqh/aḥkām* that classifies acts and duties of Muslims into categories of *farḍ/wājib* (obligatory), *makrūh* (disliked), *mustaḥabb* (recommended), and *ḥarām* (forbidden). Shariʿa has two interrelated dimensions: the divine-human relationship, consisting of a vertical axis of serving God and a horizontal axis of intersubjective, intra-human conduct, serving God's people. The former (*ʿibādāt*) is recognised as the domain of God's rights and the latter (*muʿāmalāt*) as the domain of individual and public human rights.

Shariʿa is related to the central Qurʾanic concepts of religion (*dīn*), human nature (*fiṭra*) and a deep sense of moral obligation (*taklīf*). The word religion, *dīn* and religiosity (*tadayyun*) in Arabic, are interwoven with meanings of leading a "reflective, accountable life of gratitude, justice and care". *Dīn/tadayyun* is the natural expression of meaning-making and lifestyle forming feature of human nature (*fiṭra*), and Shariʿa is a distinctive path ordained by God (Q 5:48, 45:18) with boundaries (*ḥudūd*) (Q 2:229, 58:4) to facilitate achieving wellbeing and prosperity (*falāḥ*) in

this world and the world to come. Adopting the divinely sanctioned straight path, *dīn qayyim* (Q 6:161), a balanced religiosity must be based on individual consent as "religion" is considered to be nothing but sincere counsel (*naṣīha*). Interestingly, the concept of obedience, *ṭāʿa*, in the Qurʾan literally means engaging in a reciprocal relationship and taking a decision *freely*, hence, *willingly* entering into a dialogue with God through responding to the Divine call (*taklīf*) (Q 3:83). The Qurʾanic word for volunteering, *taṭawwuʿ*, comes from the same verbal root: "whoever does an act of goodness voluntarily, God will show His gratitude by rewarding the person." (Q 2:168, 9:53) Furthermore, the words for creation (*khalq*) and moral character (*akhlāq*/*khuluq*) share the same etymology and are semantically linked to the concept of religion (*dīn*), all have the meanings of measure, esteem and discernible, balanced conduct. Humans are created with an innate capacity of forming a moral character and a way of life or custom (religion/*dīn*) (Q 26:137). Muhammad in the Qurʾan is depicted as having a sublime moral character (*khuluq ʿazīm* 68:4) (being on a distinctive path or custom/life style i. e. *dīn*) (Al-Isfahani, 2009).

The Qurʾan is aware that there are diverse human lifestyles where God may not be recognised but more significantly that there could be extreme and corrupt interpretations of the Divine path leading to the formation of unhealthy religiosities (*tadayyun*) (Q 4:171, 5:77). Similarly, empathy with the other is a crucial dimension of the Islamic sense of being religious. The poor have the right to share in the wealth of the rich, the obligatory *zakāt,* literally purification and growth. *Zakāt* that purifies one's wealth is an integral part of individual piety and self-development (*tazkiyyat an-nafs)*. Human dignity in the Qurʾan is expressed with *karāma* and *khilāfa* (stewardship of earth). *Karāma* has meanings of being generous, welcoming, free and noble, showing ethical conduct. Finally, the Qurʾan recognises that the embodiment of Shariʿa in life will necessarily be context-dependent, reflecting individual differences and social conditions. Therefore, it acknowledges the inevitable diversity in the historical applications of Shariʿa (Q 5:48, 45:18) and its universal values. As the social context of Muslim communities changed, Muslim scholars reinterpreted core Muslim teachings.

In Islam, the formation of the first faithful community (*ʾumma*) and completion of the Divine revelation are considered co-temporal. This historical experience has shaped a distinctive Islamic perception of what constitutes a sacred scripture and how it should be interpreted. Muslim belief that the Qurʾan is literally Divine speech, has erroneously led to the conclusion that this necessarily implies a literalist perception of scripture. On the contrary, the prophetic and early Muslim attitude towards the Qurʾan shows more dynamic and contextual interpretative features (Sahin, 2013). The interpretation occurs in the text itself since parts of the scripture explain other parts (intra-textual hermeneutics). The Qurʾan emphasises that human reason cannot exhaust all the meanings and wisdom embedded in the Divine word (Q 18:109, 31:27). The original intended authorial meanings cannot always be traced backed to an objectified, literal meaning, hence the human interpretive act, *taʾwīl* (tracing the origins), remains polyvocal and future orientated taking into account the changing life conditions of the communities.

A central task of the prophet was to explain the Qurʾan to its first audience which has a normative function in Muslim tradition. The prophet embodies the Divine message in real life. Thus, his prophetic conduct, *sunna*, became a wisdom tradition, acting as guide to all aspects of Muslim life. The *sunna*, originally transmitted orally, came to be written down as reports, Hadith. The Qurʾan and the prophetic *sunna* remained open to new interpretations (*ijtihād*). The interpretation of Islam by the first generations, through adopting a consensus-based decision-making process, is also considered normative, worthy of emulation. Most of the legal edicts in the Qurʾan are often qualified with an ethical alternative i. e. 'an eye for an eye', retributive justice, is moderated by restorative justice, encouraging the victim to forgive the offender or accept a monetary compensation. Moreover, as circumstances changed, the legal positions were revised by abrogation or, as the second Caliph Omar famously did, by suspending some of the scripture-based laws. Unlike later Muslim hermeneutics that saw Islam mainly from the prism of law, early Islamic interpretative engagement had an ethical, contextual focus. This has enabled growth and development within the Muslim living tradition through a progressive agenda of continuous social reform toward realising the Qurʾan's ethical demand of forming a compassionate, just society (Rahman, 1995).

This rather egalitarian interpretive attitude can be seen in the Islamic perception of community, *ʾumma*, as an inclusive polity responding to the reality of plurality in the city where Islam gained its first social expression. The famous 'Medinah Pledge' (622), led by the prophet, envisioned an inclusive civic polity that contained diverse faith communities and aimed to safeguard the wellbeing of all. The Qurʾanic concept of "people of the Book" indicates recognition of the religious other. However, it is often forgotten that prophetic traditions also emphasise the notion of "God's people" (*ʿiyāal Allah*), a more inclusive category that is open to the non-religious other. Thus, within the first city where Islam emerged as a social reality, the public space was used to facilitate peaceful coexistence. This seems to have shaped the prophet's style of leadership, as he is reported to have said "a person's goodness lies in her or his willingness to be part of a community or to bring people together as a community".

The fundamental ethical logic that permeates the Qurʾan can be summarised as follows: God, by virtue of gifting humanity with life, expects recognition and gratitude for this act of Divine generosity. Upon reflection, those who choose to acknowledge God's favour and willingly express their gratitude by worshiping Him alone, became "faithful" (literally experience safety, trust). Existentially, faithfulness is tied to the ethical attitude of gratefulness i. e. engaging with a relationship of care and respect towards oneself and others, including the environment and the Creator. In Islam's core narrative, the Divine-human relationship reflects a relational ethics of mutual recognition and cooperation for establishing justice on earth. The Qurʾan encourages meaningful debate, consensus building and taking into account the lived reality of the community. The early Islamic contextual epistemology shares some interesting features with Habermas' (1990) debate, dialogue and consensus-centred theory of knowledge, and negotiating the common good within contemporary

plural, secular societies. Within the Qurʾanic discourse there is a trust in human capacity to discover truth, good and bad, and engage with consensus building (*ijmāʿ*), essential for the survival and coexistence of communities. During the prophet-led formation of Muslim society, there seemed to have been a shared clarity on the basic ethical values necessary for communal wellbeing. There appear to have been few abstract theological discussions on what constitutes good (*ḥusn*) or bad (*qubḥ*) and whether Divine commands determine the nature of good or bad. This typical Hellenic way of framing moral discussions dominated medieval Muslim theological and philosophical discussions. In this sense, the prophet's city, Medinah, should neither be confused with ancient Athens nor with the cosmopolitan medieval Baghdad. The Qurʾanic approach to social ethics seems to follow common sense and work through a consensus-based epistemology, where goodness or harm to society are clearly discernible without much metaphysical discussion.

The Danger of Reifying Shariʿa into a Body of Ahistorical Laws

Interpreting Shariʿa as relational ethics does not mean reducing Islam to the level of private morality, a charge levelled against postcolonial Islamic modernist reformism. Al-Isfahani (d. 1086), a well-regarded mediaeval Muslim scholar for example, offered educationally-informed ethical hermeneutics to discern the moral values of Shariʿa. His work, *al-dharīʿa ilā makārim ash-sharīʿa* (the means to achieving moral excellence and dignity of the divine path) (Al-Isfahani, 1985), articulates social ethics rooted in Qurʾanic anthropology. The book begins with a discussion on the human condition including its biological (*ṭabʿ/fiṭra*) givenness and its central ethical and educational character that individuals acquire within a given social context. Law is defined as an aid to moral agency and not the other way around. Al-Isfahani critically integrates elements of ancient Greek practical virtue ethics (*phronesis*) in formulating his version of Islamic relational ethics. The ethical character of Shariʿa was not recognised as an after-thought to a legal system but as shaping the very fabric of what it means to be a human being. He distinguishes between rules discerned from Shariʿa (*aḥkām*) and its core humanising moral ethos as *makārim*. The latter enables humans to develop an inner ethical competence guiding human transformation (*tarbiyya*) and qualifying humans for stewardship of the earth (*khalifa*) which signifies dignity (*karāma*) bestowed by God on humanity.

Classical Muslim legal scholars identified five rights that summarised the ultimate purpose of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*): protecting life, family, property, religion and the human reasoning capacity to preserve human sanity (Sahin, 2011). These aims are sometimes considered alongside a hierarchy of needs (i. e. essential, required and aesthetic) that individuals or communities exhibit. This metalegal discourse appears to have emerged from analysing the *raison d'être* of the laws (*taʿīl al-aḥkām*) and discerning (*istiqrāʾ/istinbāṭ)* the Divine intentions in the revelation.

The preoccupation with authorial intentions seems to have led to text-focused legal interpretations, at the expense of the gradually disappearing earlier context-based hermeneutics evident in the hermeneutical approach of authoritative figures like Imam Malik (d. 795) who considered the entire experience of Medina, where Islamic society first emerged, as normative. Apart from the Zahiri school of thought, which limited textual engagement to its external sense only (the *ẓahir*), all other Islamic legal schools were in favour of discerning the objectives intended to protect human good by the scripture. Ibrahim al-Nakhaʿi (d. 717), an early legal authority (Qalʿajī, 1979) who advocated the use of reason while engaging with the Qurʾan, argued that "the Divine revelation demands to be reasoned with, in order to discern its objectives and wisdom, meant to protect human wellbeing". Subsequently, the concept of the higher objectives of law was worked out by scholars until it was systematised by Izz b. Abdassalaam (d. 1262) and al-Shatibi (d. 1388). However, the ethics seem largely perceived as a complementary aspect (*taḥsīniyyāt*) to this overwhelmingly legal interpretative framework.

Today, the relational ethics integral to the concept of Shariʿa, have been eclipsed to such an extent that they are increasingly perceived, by Muslims and wider society, as a reified, ahistorical, rigid system of rules and regulations. Without reclaiming this human dignity-focussed relational ethics embedded in Shariʿa, pressing issues like gender-inequality and attitudes towards religious or non-religious others in the modern Muslim communities cannot be adequately addressed. The call for the application of Shariʿa becomes empty political rhetoric, completely disassociated from protecting human freedom, dignity, welfare and the common good. Even a distinctive socio-ethical principle enshrined in the Qurʾan, such as "enjoining good and preventing harm" to ensure public welfare is maintained can be reduced to an apparatus of inhumane control, as briefly exemplified by the totalitarian hysteria of the so-called Islamic State (IS).

The main shortcoming in the *maqāṣid* discourse lies in its legalistic framing and ahistorical application, which prevents it from acting at a higher critical ethical hermeneutics level. The actual determination of the good (*maṣlaḥa*) intended to be protected, is subject to numerous legal conditions (*ḍawābiṭ*) and focused on discerning the authorial intentions rather than recognizing the lived reality of the faithful. This legal perception of the *maqāṣid* is evident in the theological discourse of its early proponents. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), one of the first formulators of the concept, for example, mostly invokes *maqāṣid* in its legal sense and often omits its ethical prerequisites. While trying to reconcile divine omnipotence and human moral responsibility, he does not seem to be particularly bothered with the apparent contradiction in saying that Shariʿa protects human reason (*ʾaql*) and yet severely curtails human agency and responsibility in producing moral actions. In his best-known work, *iḥyāʾ*, completed after an experience of spiritual transformation and synthesising his most mature understanding of Islam, Al-Ghazali largely abandons legalism in recapturing the holistic moral and spiritual guidance embedded in Shariʿa. Abu Bakr ibn Al-Arabi (d. 1148) in his Apologia (2001) (*al-ʿawāṣim min al-qawāṣim*), written to justify the innocence of all companions involved in the first civil war (*fitna* 656–661), and which fundamentally shaped the medieval Sunni

quietist political theology until modern times, does not once raise the issue of justice or remember the Qurʾanic ethical principle: "killing an innocent soul amounts to killing all humanity." (Q 5:32)

Similarly, the classical genres on ethics such as *adab* and the *faḍāʾil* (the excellences of rulers, judges) do not go beyond a well-crafted hyperbolic discourse. The ethical sense invoked by the concept of *ʾadab* originally meant a particular set of moral norms for a good life, cultivated by a class of literati in the context of Muslim court culture, and mostly remained an elitist pursuit which for commoners meant moral coercion (*taʾdīb*). Within the politically quietist and heavily legalistic Sunni piety and theological discourse, justice and ethics, two fundamental values of the Qurʾan, have often been marginalised. I. Güler (2011) offers a critical analysis as to how the Qurʾan's human freedom and justice-focused ethics of care were eroded within the predestinarian Sunni theological discourse, originally designed to justify suppressing political dissent, which has contributed to cultural stagnation in modern Muslim societies. The encounter with western secular modernity pushed early Muslim reformists to stress the moral character of Shariʿa, through popularising the notions of *maqāṣid* and common good (*maṣlaḥa*) (Salvatore, 2009; Salvatore & Eickelman, 2005). However, the political motive of trying to reconcile Islam with secular modernity has often yielded to a secular temptation to simply abrogate the Qurʾan's Medinan chapters, which cover complex sociopolitical issues.

The concept *fiqh al-ʿaqalliyyāt*, minority jurisprudence (Hassan, 2013), is an extension of a similar legal epistemology that does not actually help to contextualise Islam in the modern world. Some aspects of Islamic law (family law) are accommodated within secular legal systems of Europe (the UK's common law) which, in varying degrees, acknowledge legal pluralism in order to accommodate minority communities' claims to their own distinctive legal traditions when resolving family disputes. Accommodation of Shariʿa is now slowly happening in the areas of finance, family matters, and food industry. There are even Shariʿa courts, mostly acting as Muslim arbitration tribunals; and a European *fatwā* council overseeing an expanding 'halalification' industry. However, tensions between upholding the liberal principle of equality which informs secular democratic citizenship and the demand for recognition of difference in multicultural societies can cause conflict (Turner & Possamai, 2015). While analysing Muslim scholars' legal response to issues affecting Muslim women in Britain, Larsen (2018) suggests that the *maqāṣid* discourse is similar to a secular, common morality. She seems unaware that *fatwās* are legal verdicts based on the premodern *fiqh* regulating female conduct. *Maqāṣid* and *fiqh al-ʿaqalliyyāt* do not seem to act as metaethical discourses. As legal concepts they reflect a wider medieval politico-legal idea that divides the world into the "abode of Islam" and the "abode of non-Islam". Within such an imperial political framing, ahistorical approaches to the Qurʾan become dominant. Verses like "don't take Jews or Christians as your friends" (Q 6:66) tend to be perceived literally, ignoring the contextual reality of war as the background of the verse that was extensively commented on, while other verses praising people of the book are not remembered. This ahistorical literalism ignores the Qurʾan's rhetorical discourse and takes the complex politico-legal doctrine of *al-walāʾwa-l-barāʾ*, "disassociation from

non-Muslims" to be a categorical ban on Muslim involvement with secular public space.

However, stripped of its legal shell, the notion of *fiqh al-ʿaqalliyyāt* could actually be a powerful theological concept; it literally refers to facilitating an understanding of Islam within the reality of being a minority community. This indicates a radical rethink of what it means to be a Muslim in the modern world, where Muslims no longer hold political power nor form a majority. In its legalistic framing *fiqh al-ʿaqalliyyāt* is limited to an ahistorical application of a particular school of thought's jurisprudence on complex and sensitive issues of the contemporary world such as gender relations and social work; controversial issues such as the non-religious other, blasphemy and apostacy, which might cause more harm than benefit. This would even violate legal maxims in Islamic law suggesting "preventing common harm" (*sadd adh-dharāʾiʿ*) always has priority. What is more important is to carefully consider whether the application of specific, pre-modern *fiqh* rules enables the protection of human dignity embedded in the Islamic core narrative, while addressing contemporary issues and guiding Muslim communities' relationships with wider society.

Conclusion

This inquiry emphasised the need to rediscover the relational ethics embedded in the concept of Shariʿa and its significance in facilitating a transformative Islamic engagement with the public space and contributing to the common good within the Muslim minority context of Europe. Shariʿa is further grounded in the holistic Islamic educational view of human flourishing, *tarbiyya*, that aims to facilitate a human formation characterised by gratitude, dignity and just living. The concept of relational ethics was discussed in a reflective dialogue with Levinas' phenomenology-informed ethical philosophy and Habermas's 'theory of communicative action'.

The study argued the need for an inclusive public space where religious minorities are welcomed, without, fear of being stereotyped, policed or pressured to self-censure. The communicative process within the cultural and religious plurality of European societies cannot be limited to having mere *conversations*, often occurring between communities living parallel lives, but should also be producing concrete *convergences* in addressing inequalities, renewing public trust and working towards peaceful coexistence. The role of Muslim faith leaders in guiding their communities to take part in such a convergent public engagement, and thus facilitating a sense of belonging to the European Muslim *ʾumma*, is undeniable. European Muslim leadership education needs to equip young faith leaders to facilitate contextual understandings of Islam and to prepare them for working within a societal reality of great religious and cultural diversity and interdependence.

The political developments of the last two decades have hindered European Muslims' openness to critically address their internal problems and to engage actively with wider society. In social work which addresses social deprivation and

wellbeing issues, the level of public and community engagement does not seem to be either inclusive or transformative. There is an urgent need to conduct empirical research to understand the changing needs of Muslim youth, the impact of religious extremism, poverty, mental health, delinquency and intra-community tensions within the European Muslim diaspora. Cultivating the values of shared relational ethics remains an effective way of responding to the plurality defining European societies, generating awareness about the responsibility of "living the face of one another" and renewing public trust in forming an inclusive conception of the common good.

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Part III
Perspectives and Contributions to Alternative Social Work

Anti-oppressive Practice in Social Work with Women Wearing Hijab

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Abstract Religious beliefs are central to the identity of many people, often signalled by their physical appearance, for example, clothing, hair or jewellery. If prevented from such a form of self-expression, some take action against what they consider a contravention of their human rights. The predominance of this discourse can obscure the possibility that there are others who are forced to signal a religious viewpoint which they may not subscribe to. This chapter explores the wearing of hijab by Afghan women who have lived in Australia less than 10 years. While some choose to wear hijab, there were others who spoke of being forced to wear hijab as a form of domestic violence. Furthermore, whereas for some, not wearing hijab represents a freedom to dress in accordance with their understandings of Australia as a secular society, a few felt that wearing clothes which marked them as Islamic increased the likelihood of attracting xenophobia and discrimination. Hence, for many women, decisions around hijab represented compromise between the demands of their family, the Afghan community and the wider Australian society, rather than a free choice. Consequently, if social workers assume women's religious beliefs and identity are congruent with their appearance they may inadvertently be contributing to women's oppression. As such, this chapter explores notions of anti-oppressive practice when working with Muslim women living in non-Muslim majority countries, particularly in respect of dress codes which are associated with Islam.

Keywords Muslim women · Afghan women · Migration · Hijab · Anti-oppressive practice

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Introduction

Migration leading to increasing religious diversity is often accompanied by a fear of the 'other' (Beaman, 2018). Immigrants who are visibly different to their new communities, are frequently subject to differential and discriminatory treatment. This includes those whose attire marks them apart as having religious beliefs and practices which contrast with the majority of citizens (Colic-Peisker, 2009). As such, clothing choices for members of diasporas arguably reflect the balance between "their connections to their homeland as well their collective and individual identities in their country of residence" (Pasha-Zaidi, 2015, 89).

Although bans on wearing religious symbols have affected people of other religions, Muslim women have been disproportionately affected by such bans (Syed, 2013). While veiling has for centuries been an expression of religious devotion for women of many religions, it is often only veiling by Muslim women which is regarded as problematic (Feder, 2013). For example, hijab has been banned for state employees in some German states, as it is considered incompatible with religious neutrality (Sinclair, 2013). Elsewhere, such as in France, public bans on wearing hijab in public spaces, including schools, have been rationalised as necessary for assimilation (Syed, 2013). Although bans on wearing hijab have mostly been implemented in non-Muslim majority countries, bans have also occurred in some Muslim majority countries (Grima, 2013). For example, although now overturned (Schlötzer, 2019) in Turkey, a Muslim majority country, hijab was for a long time banned in public spaces including universities and workplaces because it was seen as a symbol of political Islam (Koo & Han, 2018).

In the absence of society-wide bans on wearing religious attire, organisational dress codes, particularly relating to employees, have sought to restrict the wearing of religious symbols, including both clothing and jewellery associated with particular religions. In some instances disputes about dress codes have been referred to courts of law by individuals who have argued that their human rights have been denied (Vickers, 2018).

In countries such as Australia, on an official level, the wearing of attire that is associated with religion is widely accepted:

> (…) wearing head covering – hijabs, turbans, yarmulkes – is largely a non-issue in Australia where, for example, the Victorian Police have uniforms incorporating turbans for Sikhs and hijabs for Muslim women, and most banks permit employees to wear uniforms that conform to cultural prescriptions, most schools permit cultural variation to school uniforms, and a great diversity of culturally specific garb is evident in most shopping precincts and on public transport. (Bouma, 2016, 761)

Nevertheless, the wearing of hijab is sometimes understood as a refusal by Muslims to assimilate (Dunn et al., 2007). Furthermore, growing Islamophobia has meant "what was once a trivial unease about a Muslim woman wearing a hijab has grown into a fear of terror within Australia's borders." (Akbarzadeh, 2016, 323) Consequently, the wearing of hijab may be interpreted as a provocative act rather than a right to religious expression (Kadan et al., 2017), particularly as Muslim

women wearing hijab have come to be regarded as the visible symbol of Islam in Western societies. Muslim women report that members of the public approach them as victims and sometimes blame them for their silence over hijab (Hussein, 2019).

Muslim women in the United States have reported being treated suspiciously and harassed more if they wear hijab (Pasha-Zaidi, 2015). If wearing hijab places Muslim women at risk of discrimination or victimisation on the basis of their religion (Gulamhussein & Eaton, 2015), it is not surprising that many choose modes of dress that make their religion invisible to outsiders. A desire to blend in with the wider society is more likely when women have extensive links outside Muslim communities, as being invisible might help them to build or develop those relationships (Colic-Peisker & Dekker, 2017).

Visibility can also bring erroneous assumptions about Muslim women (Droogsma, 2007). Hijab is often associated with subservience, helplessness and oppression (Kakoti, 2012). Thus there can be a perception that Muslim women who wear hijab are unintelligent (Mahmud & Swami, 2010), resulting in fewer offers of employment (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Grima, 2013). In an experimental study in the United States, 14 women each sought jobs at eight businesses in a shopping mall. For half the enquiries they wore hijab, and wore identical clothing without hijab for the remaining positions. The study found that less interest was displayed in applicants wearing hijab, including them being less likely to be told there was work available, how to complete the application process and to be called back by the company (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013).

Despite the potential for being discriminated against, some women in non-Muslim majority countries choose to wear hijab and argue it is their right to make such a decision (Al Wazni, 2015). Wearing hijab can be an expression of pride in being Muslim (Jackson & Monk-Turner, 2015; Mansson McGinty, 2014). It can open up social networks by enabling Muslim women to make connections with other Muslim women in non-Muslim majority counties (Droogsma, 2007; Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

Circumstances may require women to make compromises on wearing or not wearing hijab, in opposition to their personal preferences (Grima, 2013; Read & Bartkowski, 2000). Women who wear hijab do not necessarily do so by choice (Al Wazni, 2015). Some Muslim women view hijab as a form of gendered oppression, with some only wearing it to enable the consent of male relatives to leave the house (Jackson & Monk-Turner, 2015). Others report wearing hijab in Muslim contexts to overcome disapproval from other members of the community (Mansson McGinty, 2014; Pasha-Zaidi, 2015). Hence, there are many Muslim women who wear hijab some, but not all, of the time (Jackson & Monk-Turner, 2015) and make decisions about wearing hijab varying at different life stages (Grima, 2013; Zimmerman, 2015). Muslim women are also diverse across cultures and societies regarding their approaches and decisions about wearing hijab (Al-Kazi & González, 2018). Hence, professionals like social workers should understand diversities among Muslim women, and not reducing the multiple dimensions of Muslim women's identities to a single notion of the 'Muslim world' (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2017).

Social work research on why Muslim women veil in Western countries has been limited (Hodge et al., 2017). Drawing on findings from the first author's doctoral research with Afghan women who had lived in Australia for less than 10 years, this chapter will explore what anti-oppressive practice entails with women wearing hijab. We note there are some forms of Islamic dress which involve covering a woman's face and obscuring her identity but hijab does not hide a woman's face (Syed, 2013). This chapter will focus only on the wearing of hijab rather than exploring practice issues around other forms of veiling, as this was the form of veiling about which research participants spoke. Hijab or Muslim headscarf as a symbol of Islam in western countries is an important part of Muslim women's identities (Al-Kazi & González, 2018); therefore, social workers need to improve their knowledge about hijab and associated factors when working with Muslim women.

Research Project

The findings reported in this chapter were collected as part of a social work doctoral study which aimed to explore newly-arrived Afghan women's understandings and perceptions of domestic violence (Afrouz, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were conducted between June and December 2017 with 21 Afghan women who had lived in Australia for at least 6 months but less than 10 years. The research was advertised via flyers that were prepared in Farsi (Persian) and English and distributed in communities where the Afghan community was concentrated in Melbourne and online social media platforms across Australia. Women interested in participating in research about Afghan women and their experiences of living in Australia and using community services, were invited to contact the first author. Those who volunteered to take part in the research had the choice of being interviewed face-to-face, by telephone or email, and in Farsi or English.

Eleven interviews were conducted face to face, seven via telephone and three by email. Fifteen informants were interviewed in Farsi and six in English. The quotes from Farsi interviews have been translated by the first author, for whom Farsi is the first language and quotes from English interviews are referred to as "Interview in English". Informants were asked to provide pseudonyms which have been used to report findings from individual participants.

Informants were aged between 19 and 42 but most were aged in the 25–34 range. Most identified themselves as Muslim but three informants described themselves as non-religious. They were not asked directly about the hijab during the interviews; however, they spoke about hijab when they were asked to explain the meaning of being an Afghan woman in Australia. Many tended to talk about it as an important part of their life, particularly as a challenge after moving to Australia.

Findings

Most informants described hijab as part of their culture and family values and as an obligation for Afghan women. Settling in Australia, a non-Muslim majority country where most women, including many Afghan women, do not wear hijab, gave some women the opportunity to choose their dress. Others, however, encountered strong expectations that they continue to wear hijab from both family and community.

Exercising Choice

Many Muslim women cover their hair and body in front of men outside their immediate family or while in public places. While Afghan women had historically worn hijab according to their culture and understanding of the requirements of Islam, the Taliban tightened the moral code for women's dress during its rule from 1996 to 2001. In particular, it became obligatory for women in Afghanistan to wear burqa, which is an enveloping outer garment covering a woman's body and face. Although this requirement was removed in 2001, many women in Afghanistan women continue to wear hijab.

Moving to Australia, which is a more egalitarian and liberal society, opened up opportunities that were not possible in Afghanistan, including study or employment outside the home, not having an arranged marriage, and not wearing hijab. Several of the participants in this research were critical of hijab, and of those who simply accepted it as a habit, a part of their dress code or part of their identity. They believed that some women accepted to wear hijab without questioning and considering their choices. Furthermore, they regarded the wearing of hijab to be a matter of personal choice rather than a family or community obligation. Accordingly, they argued that women's decisions about hijab should be autonomous and respected. Fati, who took off her headscarf after 8 years in Australia, said:

> Fati: To be honest, wearing or not wearing is not the matter, you should decide. You should have freedom from external [pressure]. You should have a conscious decision. (Interview in English)

Yet, as Yas discovered, exercising choice can have negative consequences, so much that some women may decide to recommence wearing hijab:

> Yas: I think the hijab is a personal choice; somebody wants to wear red clothes while another may pick a white dress. For instance, my sister before coming to Australia did not want to wear hijab; after some years of living in Australia, she decided to wear chador [some participants referred to a headscarf as 'chador' even though this more usually describes a full-body covering]. That is her personal choice. I think if a woman cannot overcome her internal conflict when she is in Australian society, she will be let down by others. Fighting with both powers [family and wider society] makes women devastated and damages their self-confidence. Women may feel the shame and stigma of taking off the hijab, not because of their religious beliefs and ideas, but more about what other people will say behind their back. I have chosen to take off my hijab, and it is my personal choice.

So, for Yas, although family members may place pressure on woman to wear hijab, her capacity to make autonomous decisions is a critical factor in determining whether or not she wears a veil. However, for others, the decision to cease wearing hijab was much more pragmatic than ideological. Wearing hijab might cause some Afghan women to see themselves as outsiders and socially excluded from wider society in Australia. Concerned about their future in a western and non-religious society, they decided to unveil not because their attitude towards hijab had changed but because of the Australian media's highlighting of Islamic extremism. In particular, they were anxious about being judged by wider society as a Muslim, identifiable by their hijab.

> Tara: I like to take off my headscarf when I go to university or work or other public places, because I am not comfortable with the hijab. I feel lonely as I am not like others and I am different. I think that religious beliefs and ideas should be personal and should not be visible to others. Because of discrimination against Muslims [in Australia], I was unhappy about being labelled by wearing hijab. I wanted to live like other Australians, but my family would not let me stop wearing the hijab. They do not like giving up hijab as it is a part of their identity and culture and [to] stop wearing hijab is assumed to damage that part of the genuine culture.

Pressure from Families

Despite Afghan women's desire for change, often beginning soon after arrival in Australia, many Afghan men try to reinforce Afghan values in their new country. This makes the process of change hard, particularly for the first generation of immigrants who might face seemingly insurmountable barriers to achieving the dreams offered by life in Australia. In the early stages of living in Australia, change might mean breaking family rules or expectations. For some women changing their ideas might be considered as a betrayal of their family.

> Yas: Beliefs, characters and the way they grew up make many Afghan people accept the current way of life. If women act differently, their behaviour will not be approved by other people as they think this [Afghan lifestyle] is the best way. We had been taught that, as a woman, we should act and wear something that is appropriate for Afghan women. As we had not been living in an equal society, so even in Australia, we cannot get rid of that fear of that society. Women are worried about many things, so they would rather wear a hijab or act according to the community to be safe and comfortable. On the other hand, there are not many limitations for boys – boys usually drink alcohol and that is against our culture, but because they are men, they can do it.

For many women, negotiating hijab was an important part of their transition to living in a new country. Most believed that wearing hijab was a personal matter and demanded the autonomy to unveil. That decision was not always accepted by family members or the community and unveiling led to strong disagreements with family members. In particular, Afghan women with a religious or traditional family felt more obliged to follow the rules of wearing hijab, even if they preferred not to.

While many informants said that family members should accept an Afghan woman's decision to stop wearing hijab, a few believed that women should accept their family's expectations and wear hijab, even if it was not their preference. Mahia, for example, believed hijab should be a woman's choice, but without the family's consent to remove the headscarf, it was better to continue to wear it:

> Mahia: Many families have a problem with their children [girls] about hijab because they [Afghan girls] do not want to wear it, but their family forces them. If they do not want to wear hijab, that might bring shame to their family, and this is an important conflict in Afghan families because girls are allowed to study and go to school or work in Australia, so hijab has become an important issue here. Sometimes the consequences of not wearing hijab are profound. If a family asks me about the hijab, I will say, accept your daughter's decision and do not force her to wear hijab; it is not shame, hijab should be a personal choice. However, if girls ask me whether they should take off hijab without their family's consent I will say, look to your family; if you do not have family consent to take off your hijab, it is better to act according to your family's values and traditions and wear it.

She also said that Afghan families might not let their women go out without hijab because they believed this would besmirch the family's reputation; this would bring even more limitations for those who had a disagreement over hijab. Mahia believed that girls should act according to their family's principles to keep the family intact. However, Tara who was concerned about being identified as Muslim by her clothes, reported that her family did not acknowledge the issue and prioritised their cultural obligations over her need for inclusion.

Some informants believe that covering a women's body and hair prevents men from seeing women as sexual objects. Hence, women are encouraged to wear hijab so as to be comfortable in public. However, some believed that men in Australia did not usually look at unveiled women as sexual objects, and so women should be allowed to take off their hijab in public. For example:

> Shy: I know a family that had an issue with their daughter for taking off her hijab; they had strong disagreement until her father agreed to it. I think that men should understand that Australian society is well-educated [and does not look at women as sexual objects], so they don't need to be worried about wearing hijab. If in Afghanistan or Iran women go out without hijab, other people [men] sexually stare at them.

Similarly, Yas said that her father agreed with her decision not to wear hijab because it was an accepted value in Australia and men did not look at women as sexual objects for not practising hijab.

> Yas: Because my father told us that men in Australia, unlike men in Afghanistan, do not stare at you when you do not cover your hair, so you are free to not wear hijab; but for my mother, it was not the case.

For women who were married, husbands were often critical as to whether women were able to enact their preference to unveil. After 4 years of living in Australia, Roia has finally received permission from her husband to take off her headscarf. Her husband had exerted control over her body by forcing her to continue wearing hijab. The extent to which this is an issue in the Afghan community is reflected by the majority of informants proposing that forcing women to wear hijab should be recognised as domestic violence among the Afghan community in Australia.

> Samaneh: I told my community that violence is not just beating: it can also be verbal or restricting you from going out. Unfortunately, in our community, they do not think these acts are violence. For instance, if my husband had forced me to wear chador [headscarf], it would have been a kind of domestic violence because I did not wear hijab before my marriage – why should I do it now?

Some informants reported being subjected to domestic violence as a consequence of unveiling. For example, Angela said she was forced to wear hijab and that ceasing to wear hijab was the main reason her husband used to justify his abusive behaviour.

Pressure to wear hijab came not only from family members within Australia. Fearing disapproval led some women to conceal their unveiling from family members overseas:

> Sarah: After eight years of living in Australia, still, my family do not know that I do not wear a hijab. I still pretend to be a hijabi woman in front of my family and on social media. I do not want them to be hurt and then hurt me by their judgement. I have a headscarf with me and I wear it when I want to take a photo in a public place. Many women would like to stop wearing hijab after they come to Australia, but their family or their husband force them to wear it.

So some women would rather pretend to wear the hijab than confront their family, as that might trigger dispute and dissatisfaction. This includes careful consideration as to how they are photographed and what images are placed on social media. However, while images which show women wearing hijab diffuse the potential for tension within the family, some informants did not want their Australian friends to see them in hijab.

Community Pressure

Pressure from family members to veil may relate to perceptions as to what is acceptable within the wider Afghan community. This reflected concerns of family members about other people's judgements inside the community rather than their personal beliefs:

> Angela: Afghan women may have some freedom to take off their headscarf or wear a short skirt to go to university, but they should wear hijab when they go to community events because we must act like an Afghan woman in Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan. For instance, I should behave like them in front [of the] Afghan community. Having worn hijab for a long time, I have accepted the restrictions. This has led to a complex feeling of being hypocritical. I show different things in public, especially to the Afghan community, that I do not believe in.

Consequently, some women reported an expectation to wear hijab when attending Afghan community events, even if they do not wear it in other contexts:

> Fati: When I go to my parent's neighbourhood, I do [wear hijab]. We wear [a] scarf there, and most of the women, the youngest, are not happy with hijab, but the community force them to do [it]. Forcing to wear hijab is a form of violence, it is something I do not want to. (Interview in English)

Roia reported similar pressure to wear hijab within the Afghan community:

> Roia: It is my right to choose my clothes because I want to be like other people in Australia, not an unusual person. However, because of community judgements or the way they look at me, that puts me under pressure to wear the hijab again. So, when I am in the community, I behave like them so as not to be blamed for my behaviour and clothes.

For many Afghan families, keeping hijab meant protecting their reputation in the community and to stop wearing it brought shame and blame. Roia started to resist wearing the hijab after coming to Australia and experienced that there were in fact very real consequences for asserting her right not to veil.

Discussion: Hijab, an Islamic Responsibility or a Woman's Choice?

Hijab has become a symbol of oppression for both Western feminists and politicians (Al Wazni, 2015). As such, it represents an embodiment of Muslim identity which evokes strong emotional responses both from wearers and observers according to the cultural and personal meanings which they associate with veiling (Mansson McGinty, 2014). Consequently, where veiling is not compulsory, particularly in a non-Muslim majority country, Muslim women feel they are scrutinised whether or not they wear hijab (Zimmerman, 2015).

This scrutiny applies to researchers too. Participants' willingness to take part in research and sharing their stories about hijab might vary, depending on their views of the researcher's attitudes towards hijab (Carland, 2017). This study interviews were conducted by the first author, an Iranian immigrant woman who no longer wears hijab. It can be assumed that women who struggled with expectations to wear hijab were more comfortable sharing stories about regarding veiling/unveiling with a woman who had worn hijab in the past and could therefore be sympathetic to their situation.

Living in Australia, a country where most women do not wear hijab, prompted some Afghan informants to unveil, which was not without challenges. Some experienced disapproval from family members and/or others in the Afghan community. Women's decisions about wearing hijab depended on a complex array of factors including personal attitudes and perspectives, family and community obligations, and perceptions as to the acceptability of wearing hijab in broader Australian society. Hence, despite believing they had a right to make an autonomous decision about veiling, the reality for Afghan women is that they must comply with the expectations of others. Moreover, expectations about wearing hijab often cluster with other restrictions or expectations under the umbrella of patriarchy (Abdullah, 2015).

While the women in this study had issues with the forced wearing of hijab, there are also many young Muslim women who choose to veil, in some cases even despite their parents' discontent (Droogsma, 2007; Eid, 2015). Both compulsory veiling

and forced unveiling represent a diminishment of women's agency (Zimmerman, 2015).

Previous research has suggested that the experiences of the Afghan community are not dissimilar to those of the wider Muslim community in Australia. It has even been claimed that "the Afghan experience represents a microcosm of the larger challenges facing the many ethnic communities that follow Islam in Australia." (Akbarzadeh, 2016, 324) While recognising that such claims may be based on wishful thinking rather than verifiable fact, it is nevertheless plausible that the findings reported in this chapter apply to Muslim women from other ethnic backgrounds living in Australia.

The generalisability of the findings to other countries must also be considered. The experience of being Muslim varies between countries, and the experience in Australia is not necessarily the same as for Muslims living in other Muslim minority countries (Bouma, 2016). Unlike some previous studies in other countries which found that Muslim women were free to choose or discard hijab after migration (Al Wazni, 2015; Jasperse et al., 2012), many informants in this study faced family restrictions and obligations which resulted in some remaining veiled, or selectively unveiling depending on whom they were meeting. In a study conducted by Al Wazni (2015), American Muslim women referenced the Qur'an, rather than family obligation, for their decision to continue wearing hijab, while informants in the present study felt it was their families that obliged them to remain veiled. It should be noted that pressure to wear hijab came not only from family members within Australia. Fearing disapproval from family members overseas also led some women to conceal their unveiling when in contact with family members not in Australia.

Whether some informants wore hijab constantly or selectively, they considered the decision should be a personal one. Regardless of their decision, informants opposed family interference in this personal matter, and perceived the restrictions over hijab as a form of domestic violence. Setting rules about clothing enables men to exert control over the women in their families (Droogsma, 2007). Hence, informants' rejection of their husband's and/or other family member's demands over hijab might also reflect their resistance to patriarchal norms that control women's bodies, and show their critical reflection over being controlled by the patriarchal culture.

Family pressure to wear hijab was reinforced by the community and resulted in more control exerted over women. Some informants said that husbands forced them to wear the hijab when socialising with the Afghan community to avoid negative judgement and gossip. Therefore, these findings are inconsistent with some previous studies that found Muslim women regarded wearing hijab as useful in strengthening their ties with other Muslim community members, maintaining Muslim identity, facilitating relationships, enhancing freedom and protecting women (Alghafli et al., 2017; Droogsma, 2007; Jasperse et al., 2012).

Unveiling for Afghan women might also be a part of readjusting to a new country that offers more freedom to women. The informants' experiences showed that the process of taking off hijab was remarkably difficult because multiple factors were at play, depending on women's attitudes, family concerns and obligations, Afghan

community pressure and finally Australian society. Mainstream society played a crucial role in women's decision about the hijab, as some were concerned about the judgements and opinions of others in a non-Muslim majority country. This is not surprising, as previous studies found that Muslim women in Australia and other non-Muslim majority countries were concerned about facing xenophobia, discrimination and stigmatisation if they were identified as Muslims (Afshar, 2012; Eid, 2015; Fayyaz & Kamal, 2014; Grima, 2013; Hebbani & Wills, 2012; Jasperse et al., 2012; Keddie, 2018; Wagner et al., 2012). Hence, Muslim women are in a double bind, blamed for whichever decision they make (Carland, 2017).

Implications for Social Work Practice

Promotion of human rights, including respect for diversity, is a critical element of the International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW, 2014) definition of social work. Rights-based social work actively challenges discrimination on the basis of difference (Mapp et al., 2019). In respect of women and hijab, both banning and forcing women to wear this attire are human rights issues (Syed, 2013) which may emerge in social work practice.

Social work practice which adopts an anti-oppressive stance understands power relations as oppressing some groups of people in society (Mullaly, 2010). Personal and cultural bases of oppression must be combined with a structural analysis of oppression, as oppression stems from unequal power through social divisions. This analysis can be done by social workers in collaboration with service users. Not only do anti-oppressive theorists explore multiple sources of structural oppression, but they are also concerned with the interaction between structural, personal, psychological, and cultural sources of oppression (Healy, 2014), from personal attitudes to cultural values that have been internalised via socialisation and in relation to the structure of society, such as patriarchy. As such, simply telling women to take off their veils is not culturally sensitive social work (Kakoti, 2012).

Oppression is assumed to be a dynamic, continuous and mutually reinforced social process (Mullaly, 2010). Oppressive factors for Afghan women are not parallel: their positions as both women and immigrants complicate and strengthen each other (Laing et al., 2013). Social workers' perspectives on hijab might further contribute to the oppression experienced by Afghan women. Indeed, it has been suggested that:

> The Islamic practice of veiling, hijab, is one example where the perceptions of some social workers may be clouded by the prevailing meta-narrative with a resulting abrogation of the client's right to self-determination. Veiling is widely perceived in Western discourse as oppressing women, as a manifestation of enslavement. (Hodge, 2005, 168)

Consequently, if "the narrative that the hijab is symbolic of oppression and patriarchy has become so commonplace, it opens up the possibility for clinicians to enact bias and prejudicial behavior in the clinical encounter" (Al Wazni, 2015, 332).

Instead, it is crucial that social workers do not make assumptions about what hijab means to individual women (Schmidt, 2011). As with any issue, social workers should avoid asking service users questions which are of a prying nature and not assume hijab is the problem. General questions around how individuals see themselves and their issues at this time are no different to how social workers might work with any service users. A general question can be asked, as it was in the first author's research on the meaning of being an Afghan woman in Australia. Then, if hijab is raised, questions should be framed in neutral language, such as asking how women have made decisions about wearing hijab (Grima, 2013; Zimmerman, 2015).

Social workers can have misperceptions as to what it means to be Muslim and those who do not conform, for example those who do not wear hijab, are considered to have less allegiance to their faith (Rajan-Rankin, 2014). Conversely, social workers who do not consider it to be a religious requirement, are less likely to support women's rights to wear hijab (Vickers, 2018). Either way, preconceived views about hijab can lead to "services that are offered on the basis of an essentialist conception of what it means to be Muslim" (Graham et al., 2010, 338) rather than those which meet the needs of specific service users. Furthermore, social work practice is not anti-oppressive if it requires diversity to be visible in order to be recognised (Rajan-Rankin, 2014). Social workers need to be aware of the diversity of opinions toward Islam and differences as to how hijab is practiced by Muslim women. This can help to maintain a person-centred approach in their practice rather than labelling them simply as Muslim or according to their religious sect (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2017, 55).

Some wariness about religion by social workers is not necessarily a bad thing, given that religious beliefs of many persuasions have at times been used to oppress individuals and communities (Melendez & LaSala, 2006) and been integral to their experiences of disadvantage and discrimination (Vickers, 2018). Yet, despite not agreeing with veiling, social workers may find themselves advocating for the rights of individuals to veil (Hodge et al., 2017). Supporting women's choices to veil is consistent with an understanding that is central to the core tenets of social work practice:

> Respecting people's human dignity means respecting their self-determination – appreciating, trusting, and empowering their ability to make decision for themselves. It also means viewing people as fully human, complete with strengths, capabilities, potential, and rights. (…) To respect people's human dignity, social workers must combat dehumanization, a product of stigmatization and scapegoating. Social workers can protect people's human dignity by promoting the rehumanization of people who have been stigmatized and discriminated against. (Mapp et al., 2019, 263)

Having the utmost respect for human dignity is at the crux of anti-oppressive practice, and unless there is a clear reason not to, for example an individual who is not legally competent to make decisions or is placing others at risk, their agency needs to be highly regarded. This is particularly difficult, as social workers might face a paradoxical situation, in that their values or beliefs contradict service users' values and choices (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2017, 59), for example, when agency results in a woman choosing what a social worker might regard as repulsive, such as

wearing hijab. Conversely, a social worker who has strong views about filial or marital duty might find it difficult to support women who choose not to wear hijab despite strong family pressure. In such situations it is the capacity to do what best respects the needs of service users, even if that is in direct contrast to what a social worker would do if she or he were in a similar situation, that determines whether or not the principles of anti-oppressive practice have been applied.

Social workers also need to promote a positive, dynamic and inclusive environment within organisations where they practice. This approach requires social workers' commitment to anti-oppressive practice, not only in their individual practice but also in collective actions to address an oppressive and discriminatory environment (Smith, 2020). Social work agencies that work with Muslim women may also need to develop an open discussion on social work values, and how to adapt their services to include Muslim women's values, rather than imposing social work knowledge (Graham et al., 2009). In many countries, "how to handle visible manifestations of religion, particularly the hijab" (Baker & Dinham, 2018, 26) is a critical issue for policy makers and social workers providing services to individuals and communities who are juggling with issues around welfare and social cohesion and sometimes also violent extremism. This requires not only a knowledge of different belief systems, but also a critical awareness of what informs one's own beliefs and practices (Crisp & Dinham, 2019; Smith, 2020). Although this chapter has focused on the wearing of hijab by Muslim women, the complexities identified around anti-oppressive means in practice potentially apply to social workers working in a much wider range of contexts in different countries and with service users from a wide range of religious beliefs or none at all.

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Social Work and Muslim Welfare: A Women's Grassroots Association

Jussra Schröer and Birsen Ürek

Abstract Religion, religiosity and spirituality are gaining importance for social work in Germany as a discipline and as a profession, especially in the context of Muslim people seeking advice. Most Muslims regard Islam as a social religion which helps in different life situations. For them, the central elements of their belief, such as mercy, charity, solidarity and assisting each other, are core elements of help in society. The purpose of this chapter is to show the importance of the real life experiences of people who seek advice in social work. In this context, the chapter shows that counselling is subject-, task- and context-related. Counselling deals with life realities and can address and solve specific problems, support individuals in making decisions and coping effectively with crises. At the least, a sensitive attitude towards religious questions provides an ability to deal constructively with the reality of life. Within this perspective, the practice model, the Meeting and Further Training Centre for Muslim Women, shows how it is possible to gain access to welfare issues in the context of religion and social work.

Keywords Social work · Religion · Muslim welfare · Counselling

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the significance of religion-sensitive social work and professional opportunities to connect to the life-worlds of the addressees in relation to religion and migration. It also shows that Muslim thinking in social work hardly differs from the humanistic approach to social work and the values represented in it.

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Impacted by constant flows of migration, the countries of the so-called global North have become homes for very diverse worldviews and religious traditions. Subsequently, social work in these countries has been challenged to open up to worldview and religious issues in order to foster the further development of the people it addresses. In the context of increasing pluralisation and current social and political discussions on challenges facing refugees and forced migration in Europe and Germany, for some time now, religious migrant organisations seem to be actors of major significance for social work (Weiß, 2016, 105). Based on linguistic, cultural, and social competences, they could act as bridges between old and new migrants.

In a similar way, particularly in recent years, there have been arguments in support of locating social work within Muslim contexts (Ströbele et al., 2018). Until now, different institutions have mainly carried out non-statutory welfare in the context of social work in Germany. At the same time, however, it is also apparent that these established welfare providers face the challenge of adapting their social services with regard to religious and cultural diversity. This can be explained – among other things – by the fact that religious values are no longer explicitly communicated here nor is religious affiliation a condition for being able to make use of social services of established welfare organisations (Weiß, 2016, 107).

Furthermore, in the course of the internationalisation, professional social work has recently become more common worldwide. Since more social work models also emphasise the importance of understanding the worldview of addressees for effective social work, there is an increasing demand for the integration of religion into social work (Nauerth et al., 2017).

International social work must, therefore, be understood as recognising that social action, related problems and conflicts do not end at national borders. In a globalising world with diverse migratory movements, social problems can no longer be understood without taking into consideration the relevant transnational and cultural context. On the other hand, globalisation and migration now also represent the essential basis for the internationalisation of social work (Ramseier & Božić, 2011). This means that social work takes on an analytical perspective on social conflicts in the different realities of the lives of its beneficiaries (Thiersch & Böhnisch, 2014).

The primary purpose of this chapter is to discuss ways in which religion and social work respond in the context of Muslim diversity in Germany. Proceeding from this context, the contribution focuses on the following aspects: the first section discusses the terms religion and social work both from an international perspective and in a Muslim context. The second section describes the tasks of social work in a plural religious worldview context, based on the example of the social welfare organisation *Begegnungs- und Fortbildungszentrum muslimischer Frauen* (BFmF, Meeting and Further Training Centre for Muslim Women).

Conceptual Reflections on Islamic Social Work

Obviously, religions are still present in Germany, shaping the lives and actions of people in their everyday life. Years ago, Jürgen Habermas had already focused on religions, reflecting on their significance for independent and free thinking. His starting position for this assumption is that religion is essential, especially for modern, liberal, and egalitarian societies. He emphasises that religiosity persists and remains significant in secularised life contexts. He even sees new attention being given to religions, not only in the private sphere, but also in the social, public sphere. According to Habermas, just the power of religious thoughts could articulate forms of a way of humanely living together, granting each person his or her individual dignity (Habermas, 2001, 2012).

According to Lutz and Kiesel (2016, 11), religion and religiosity must be considered in their life-world significance, especially as a resource of meaning making. In so doing, they differentiate between religion, religiosity, and spirituality in social work. Religion means the organisation of a culturally-defined religious community, which has a recognisable and regulated structure and is based on common practices. Religiosity, on the other hand, refers to an individual's subjective experience, as well as practice, of a specific faith and in the practice of religions. Spirituality stands for spiritual experience and the spiritual search for sense and transcendence, which can be a search for God within a religion, but which can also involve other things. The current individual quest for religiosity or spirituality seems to be a social aspect that at its core offers experiences of transcendence which reach deep into everyday structures and communicate meaning. Given the impact of religion on life conditions, its relevance for social development, as well as its plurality, social work should engage with it more intensively than ever before.

The relevance of religion for social work has so far been widely neglected in social research. Subsequently, there are currently barely any studies that address the issue of Islamic social work in Germany. This is largely because, in Germany, being Muslim is an elusive state, as it refers to a very diverse population (Aslan et al., 2017; Amirpur, 2013; Spielhaus, 2011). Indeed, Muslims in Germany are characterised by heterogeneous sociocultural, linguistic, religious, and political tendencies. Accordingly, they differ in their affiliation to Islamic organisations too.

Even though there have been a few studies on counselling and social work in Muslim contexts in recent years (Şahinöz, 2018; Yanık-Şenay, 2018; Aslan et al., 2015; Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016; Ucar & Blasberg-Kuhnke, 2013), there are currently no homogeneous answers to the question as to what exactly the adjective Islamic means in the term Islamic social work. Islam is a dynamic religion that has adapted to the realities of life in a variety of places and, in context of Islamic social work, confirms the plurality of daily life. This is emphasised in the revelations of the Qurʾan as an intended plurality (Q 49:13). Therefore, one can speak of a common Islam only in its core contents, such as the divine teachings, the histories of the prophets, and the principles as well as the pillars of faith.

Today, Muslims make up about 5.7% of German population. They are an ever-growing social group and belong to the major religious minorities (Halm & Sauer, 2017, 15). The majority are now fourth generation post-immigration and are therefore represented in all social groups, from kindergarten children to students, workers and professionals up to retirees. According to the Religion Monitor 2017, approximately 4.7 million people of Muslim faith were living in Germany in 2015. Between May 2011 and the end of 2015, approximately 1.2 million Muslims migrated to Germany. As a result, both the number and the composition of the Muslim population in Germany has changed. Nearly every second Muslim comes from a country other than Turkey. Muslims from the Middle East have now become the second largest group of origin in Germany, with a share of 17.1% (Halm & Sauer, 2017, 15–17). To sum up, the Muslim population in Germany is heterogeneous. The diversity of Islam and Muslims in Germany has led to a differentiation in relevance for different social arenas. As Islam cannot be presented as a uniform entity, Islamic social work needs to be differentiated accordingly.

According to Ramseier and Božić (2011), the definition of social work is time- and context-dependent. They also argue that the focus of social work depends on cultural, historical, and socio-economic conditions. In general, a definition of social work is not static, because it should remain dynamic in order to develop (Ramseier & Božić, 2011, 36). The history of social work is based on the development of social support and traditional welfare work. Social work in Germany has evolved from the social constellation, based on traditions of helping and parenting. As a result of historical development, the activities, tasks, and objectives of social work have constantly changed (Thole, 2012) and are expected to further evolve in the context of globalisation, the increasing differentiation of societies and with regard to challenges arising in the context of religion and migration.

The development of social work also has implications for the professional identity of social workers. The increasing differentiation of society and globalisation means the requirements for social work will increase. The professional identity of social workers therefore also needs to adapt to these changes, including religious and migration-related ones.

As in all religions and religious communities, there are different tendencies in Islam. For this reason, Islam in the context of social work can only be referred to on core issues, such as the principle of faith, the prophets, the Qur'an and the five pillars. Moreover, besides Sunni and Shiite Islam, there are also other, minor movements and traditions, as well as 'secular Muslims' who strive for a separation between religion and society. Culturally, there is evidence that from the sixteenth century in India, Iran and today's Turkey, Islam experienced different developments and was shaped by local cultural traditions (Ramseier & Božić, 2011, 26). This brief description of Muslim diversity in context of social work shows that Islam is not a uniform construction, neither as a religion nor as a social phenomenon. It always depends on the individual situation of those seeking advice, who we encounter in social work.

Due to worldwide social changes and movements, as well as developments in the profession itself, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) revised its

definition of social work in 2014. With this revision, the term 'indigenous knowledge' found its way into the new global definition of social work, which has professional and ethical implications for social work associations around the world. The wording is as follows:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central for social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being. The above definition may be amplified into national and/or regional levels. (IFSW, 2014)

The central tasks of social work in the context of this definition include the promotion of social change, social development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Social work is a practical profession and a scientific discipline which assumes that interlocking historical, socio-economic, cultural, spatial, political, and personal factors can offer opportunities for human well-being and development, but also present obstacles. Structural barriers contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities, discrimination and oppression. Measures to remove structural and personal obstacles are essential for emancipatory practice. In solidarity with all those who are disadvantaged, social work also aims to combat poverty, liberate the defenceless and oppressed, and promote social inclusion and cohesion. The need to eliminate and change the structural conditions that contribute to social exclusion and oppression is the motivation for social work action. Gender equality is an important issue in this context, which is also addressed by social work. Although Islam is sometimes considered an obstacle to the emancipation of women, one can see a convergence between feminist or gender-sensitive social work on the one hand (Hicks, 2015) and Muslim thought on gender justice on the other hand (Amirpur, 2020). The Muslim Women's Meeting and Training Centre in Cologne can be seen as an example of self-empowerment at the interface of social work and religious activism.

According to an international agreement, social work sees itself explicitly as a human rights profession that works for the enforcement of rights and for social integration of all people-even with regard to religion, because religion proves to be a dimension of the everyday life of social work which has grown out of life contexts within people themselves. In this sense, religious education is a constitutive part of social work (Schweitzer, 2018, 1306). Migration and increasing religious pluralism in Germany have given a new visibility to religion within social work. It may thus be assumed that social work plays some role in all religious communities, which implies social consequences for the relationship between Islam and social work. It opens up new possibilities for religious bodies from various organisations to take care of a growing population affected by physical and mental needs (Gabriel, 2018, 1296).

The overarching principles of social work are respect for the value and dignity of the human person, the principle of not harming any human being, respect for diversity, and the defence of human rights and social justice. Social work as a profession

stands for the fact that human rights and shared responsibility are inseparably linked. The idea of shared responsibility highlights the fact that individual human rights can only be guaranteed if people take responsibility for each other and for the environment and underlines the importance of establishing mutual relationships in communities. One of the main priorities of social work is therefore to defend people's rights at all levels and to support achievements in people taking responsibility for the well-being of others; and to take into account and respect interdependence between people, and between people and the environment.

Social work is legitimised and justified by the fact that it intervenes at the juncture between people and their environment. The environment includes the various social systems in which people live, as well as the natural, geographical environment, which has a strong influence on people's lives. The participatory approach adopted in the context of social work is reflected in the fact that people and structures are involved in order to overcome existential challenges and improve well-being. In social work, as far as possible, work is done with, rather than, for people. Social work aims to strengthen people's hope, self-esteem, and creative potential in everyday life.

Until the 1970s, the care and support of immigrants was not understood and perceived by the regular healthcare system as a task. According to Cyrus and Treichler (2004), the few measures and offers, such as private lessons, tutoring help for school and language support, were deficit-oriented and not integrative until then. Until the 1990s, the care, social counselling, and support of immigrants were mainly delegated to the social counselling for foreigners, which was mainly implemented by welfare organisations (AWO Bundesverband, 2002, 74; Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016). *Caritas* was given responsibility for immigrants from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and for Catholic immigrants from the former Yugoslavia; *Diakonie* was responsible for people from Greece; and Workers' Welfare for immigrants of the Muslim faith, such as those from Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, and the former Yugoslavia. In 1999, the allocation of nationalities to certain charities was abolished. Since then, institutionalised social counselling for foreigners has developed into migration social work.

Research studies increasingly point out that the needs of immigrants are much more complex than previously assumed (Amnesty International, 2018; El-Mafaalani & Toprak, 2011; Hamburger, 2018; Kunz, 2015; Marschke, 2014; Weiss, 2014). These needs can no longer be met by migration social work measures alone, although these have become better differentiated, especially in the last decade. This has led to a demand for intercultural and inter-religious openness in mainstream services, which has become louder and louder and still represents a major challenge for social work institutions and organisations today (Freise, 2016; Oelkers et al., 2016).

In recent years, there has been growing interest among organisations and services about culturally and religiously sensitive approaches to working with people of the Muslim faith (Nauerth et al., 2017; Yanık-Şenay, 2018). This includes the use of interpreting services or the employment of bilingual or bicultural specialists. In addition to multilingualism, the individual faith of the addressees is emphasised as an emotional resource for coping with the demands of life, especially in the context

of flight migration. Yanık-Şenay (2018) addresses specific prerequisites and conditions for Muslim family counselling with special care structures and concepts of assistance. In her work, she highlights the importance of Muslim counselling as a significant aspect of social participation. Nauerth et al. (2017) show the challenges and requirements of religious sensitivity in counselling in the context of social work: religion and spirituality represent a resource for resilience and must therefore not be overlooked by social work. With a view to Islam, the importance of religious sensitivity in youth welfare, to which Muslim families and young people increasingly belong, is addressed.

In the following section, a practical approach to the issues of welfare provision in the context of religion and social work is presented. Since 1996, the Muslim Women's Meeting and Training Centre has been a successful example of organisational development for education and social work in Muslim contexts.

The Muslim Women's Meeting and Training Centre

The Muslim Women's Meeting and Training Centre in Cologne is considered a model project (Ceylan & Kiefer, 2016) for Muslim education and social work across Germany. The centre, founded in 1996, was launched as a self-empowerment initiative by Muslim women of different ethnic backgrounds. Until then, mosque communities and cultural associations in particular had mainly been managed in the language of origin of the different ethnic minorities. Linguistically mixed or wholly German-speaking groups were often not addressed by this offer. Due to the linguistic heterogeneity of its founders and visitors, BFmF was founded as a German-speaking women's institution.

In this capacity, BFmF was intended to be a place of encounters and education for all interested Muslim women, regardless of their linguistic or ethnic origin. Above all, mothers who could had difficulty finding an outside social environment with their children in other places or were unable to continue their education should be given the opportunity to do so at BFmF. This has also been made possible by the childcare offered since the beginning, parallel to all courses. The centre also seeks to be a place where Muslim women, who are often disadvantaged in the society and viewed as uneducated and oppressed, could develop themselves, pursue their interests, satisfy their needs for social exchange and further education, and make all the decisions themselves.

Even though the initiators are all Muslim women, the centre was not founded explicitly for religious reasons nor on the basis of a specific Qurʾanic verse or Hadith. Rather, the centre was established on an unspoken Islamic motivation to help each other, to support the needy and to receive further training. Reflection on the religious motives for establishing such a centre arose over time. To support the fraternity, the Qurʾan verse (49:13) was used: "O mankind! Truly We created you from a male and a female, and We made you peoples and tribes that you may come to know one another. Surely the most noble of you before God are the most reverent

of you. Truly God is Knowing, Aware"[1] This message is reinforced by a Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad handed down by Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī: "The true believer stands by the other believer as if they were a solid construction: each part holds and strengthens the other. In order to show the mutual solidarity, the prophet put the fingers of one hand around those of the other." (Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, 2007)

Religious education and the preservation of Islamic identity are still important aspects of the centre. Initially, however, the focus was not on building a professionally functioning Muslim educational and social institution. This arose instead from a necessary reaction to growing demand. One reason why this need appeared to BFmF is that people looking for help turned to a counselling centre with a similar religious and cultural background, particularly on such sensitive issues as education, marriage and family problems. They hoped for a greater understanding of their situation and more realistic or appropriate solutions to their living conditions. The work performed was initially carried out without government funding and was only financed later by government agencies based on evidence of need and the services provided. The centre has always worked in advance before recognition and funding were granted. In this way, the professionalism of their work was demonstrated in advance. Over time, BFmF became a well-known and professional institution. Thanks to its professionalism, more and more people seeking advice from counselling centres at other social institutions were forwarded to this centre.

The founders were education-oriented young women, some of whom were looking for work, in vocational training or in college, and initially brought their diverse skills to the new institution on a voluntary basis. At the beginning, specific inquiries from visitors about educational and meeting opportunities for Muslim women were foremost and were the driving force for further development. For the initiators and employees, it was more important to find quick solutions to the everyday problems of visitors than to deal theoretically with women's rights at that point in time. Dealing with socio-political issues and becoming involved in relevant committees resulted from the growing recognition and relevance of the centre in the community. As a result, a first course programme was quickly created, which was actively accepted and expanded accordingly. The newly founded centre was located near the University of Cologne and thus became a meeting point for Muslim students at the university. Rent for the rooms was earned through a monthly membership fee as well as course and seminar fees.

Programmes in the area of education, advice, meeting and support have been expanded in line with growing demand. Both through demand from visitors and the fact that many Muslim women were unable to get jobs due to being veiled, the possibility of creating paid jobs was developed under the umbrella of BFmF. For example, job creation measures (ABM) by the Employment Agency opened new employment opportunities for previously unemployed Muslim women. This was the first step towards professionalising the institution. Other Muslim women who experienced discrimination on the labour market, especially graduates from the

[1] Translation by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (The Study Quran).

nearby University of Cologne, were attracted by BFmF as a potential employer. Over time, a professional, multi-ethnic and multicultural team of women was formed. State recognition of the educational work carried out to date followed within two years, which meant the institution could be put on a more solid financial footing. This development was made possible, on the one hand, by the strong commitment of the women involved and, on the other, by their knowledge of the socio-cultural, legal and economic structures of both German society and immigrant Muslim communities, which enabled them to make the correct decisions for the further development of the centre. They were able to respond quickly and adequately to the needs of primarily Muslim visitors and became an important point of contact for them.

BFmF should be seen as a pioneer in the development of an innovative, model Muslim social institution. By connecting both German and various migrant cultures with each other, the institution took on an important bridging function in intercultural and interreligious exchange. A further innovation was its claim of taking responsibility for social tasks as a Muslim institution, on an equal footing with other organisations and being treated as a financial equal in this regard. However, this commitment was not welcomed by all bodies in the social arena: both established German and Muslim institutions often distanced themselves from BFmF. It was not uncommon for the centre to face deliberate hurdles when allocating project funds or inquiries about cooperation. It was therefore very important to win supporters in public life right from the start and to make the centre a place for encounters and, above all, for interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The strong commitment at the city, state and federal level also raised the centre's profile. In addition to numerous local and regional engagements, employees of BFmF were also involved in several working groups at a federal level to develop the National Integration Plan, the German Islam Conference and other high-level bodies.

Since its foundation, the centre has been open to visits from various public institutions, such as schools, universities, police, German Army, prisons, kindergartens, media, foreign guests of the Goethe-Institute, theologians, and thus has contributed to multiplying intensive social dialogue. Among these visitors were high level politicians such as the President of the Federal German Parliament, the Federal Interior Minister, and Ministers of the Government of North Rhine-Westphalia. Muslim women also provide important information and education about the Islamic religion and Muslim life in Germany, thereby assuming an important role in building mutual understanding and maintaining social peace in society. In addition to educational seminars on Muslim life, the centre also offers important information on social, cultural, religious and legal relationships in the Federal Republic with seminars, courses and advisory services aimed at migrants. By assuming various organisational tasks in socio-spatial activities such as joint demonstrations against budget cuts, at conferences or district festivals, BFmF employees show that they are just as interested in the important issues of their social space as other social institutions and can also work competently to solve them. As a result, many reservations and prejudices have been reduced over time. Not only the open nature, but also the professional work of the centre, its active participation in all relevant committees at local,

state and federal level have contributed to the further recognition of BFmF. Over time, BFmF has developed important expertise, especially in the area of integration work for (mainly Muslim) immigrants and is called on as a reference by many Muslim initiatives and organisations across the country. Its pioneering work has meant that the centre is the first Muslim organisation to be recognised and promoted by the state in social work and it serves as an important role model. Non-Muslim organisations also appreciate BFmF's cooperation, particularly where they have created an intercultural opening in their social work. Cooperative actions have been established with counselling services, family centres, educational institutions and government institutions.

Responding to social changes is a key reason for the centre's growth from a small women's initiative to a large education and counselling centre. Even though from the beginning the centre was open to all people who supported its values and goals, most of the educational and counselling programmes established by Muslim women were aimed at Muslim women and families. The work of the centre developed through the arrival of new migrant groups in Germany. Even if the focus of educational work (especially family education, but also seminars on Islamic topics) is on Muslim people, programmes are generally open to all interested people. Depending on the focus of the advice, the consulting work can be aimed at different target groups (families, migrants, debtors, the unemployed, parents, etc.). In principle, all those seeking help can find advice and support within BFmF, regardless of their identity.

When Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, migrants from these countries came to Germany and needed support in almost all areas of life. Since then, people from this group have been another of BFmF's target groups. With the admission of Bulgarian migrants, the educational work of the centre was extended to male visitors for the first time (outside of family education programmes which were already open to men). Since then, almost all of the centre's programmes have also been opened to men. This was a development that was not intended in the beginning. The male visitors also made it necessary to hire male employees; until then, there had been male support in a voluntary form. From this development, male educators and course leaders were also hired. This fact, once again, illustrates the flexibility and openness of the centre to continue to develop according to social needs. With the admission of Syrian refugees since 2015, the centre's offer has expanded to include this group. Finally, the target group was expanded to include all migrants who are required to attend integration courses and professional German courses. Due to the multicultural composition of BFmF team, most clients can be served in a language they know, and the open and friendly welcome enables a good learning atmosphere among the course participants.

The centre provides more than 20,000 teaching hours annually, across its three recognised educational institutions. In addition, there are thousands of hours of advice given by the various advisory services. At the end of 2019, the number of employees subject to social security contributions was around 80. Approximately 30 employees work on courses on a fee basis. There are also 20 voluntary supporters in education and advisory work (as translators). In addition, there are numerous

volunteer language mediators who, as refugees with a good knowledge of German, accompany other refugees to official appointments if necessary. The majority of employees are still women and all management positions are currently filled by women. The centre has around 600 visitors a day from educational and counselling services, including over 360 people in language courses, 42 people attending three secondary school classes (to obtain the 9th and 10th class grades). Approximately 50 children from 0 to 3 years of age attend parallel childcare to the courses, 24 children under 3 years of age attend day care in the kindergarten and around 80 school children get daily homework help. Together with the employees, the centre is visited daily by more than 1000 people on average. Beyond this, employees participate in over 50 external working groups at all levels.

It should be emphasised that all educational programmes are carried out under three educational institutions as sections of BFmF: Muslim Women's Education, Muslim Family Education and the Muslim Academy. The programmes are aimed at people aged 16 and over. The family education courses also include children if they take part with their parents. While some of the counselling services are aimed specifically at migrants (e. g. migration counselling, refugee counselling), the other counselling services are generally for all those affected (educational counselling, unemployment counselling, debt counselling, etc.). Such educational and advisory work would not be possible without membership of a welfare association, since most project funds are distributed through umbrella organisations. BFmF is the first Muslim organisation to be a member of the German Parity Welfare Association (DPWV), which is one of the largest welfare associations in Germany, alongside Workers' Welfare, *Caritas* and *Diakonie*.

With its educational as well as social work and its social engagement, BFmF seeks to contribute to better social participation and, above all, to the integration of Muslim women and families, and thus for all to reach a better and more friendly coexistence. Even though the path to professionalisation was paved with many difficulties, especially prejudice against Muslim people and in particular Muslim women, BFmF shows that with the necessary commitment and the right decisions, it is possible. It was necessary to focus on people's needs and look for solutions. In order to achieve this goal, good cooperation with all those involved was important. Thanks to the open nature and transparent way of working of BFmF, many prejudices were eliminated. Through such social engagement, a contribution can be made to more positive perception and better social acceptance of Muslims.

Conclusion

Orientation towards the individual realities of those seeking advice is considered a central principle of social work. Religion, religiosity and spirituality can be of essential importance for social work as a discipline and as a profession. In this context, significant concepts of social work such as social justice, environment, resources, difference, solidarity, empowerment, participation, coping and resilience

are undoubtedly compatible with a sensitive approach to religious realities in everyday life. Islam is regarded as a social religion of assistance: for Muslims, charity and welfare, solidarity and mutual help are the central elements of their faith. From the Qurʾan, the idea of solidarity with a call to mercy as means of charity arises, taking place from a person-to-person perspective. Social work in Muslim organisations in Germany is based on employees' social commitment and is indispensable to cover basic needs when necessary, for example, if access to state benefits is lacking.

The experience of BFmF makes it clear that Muslim assistance seekers need religiously and culturally sensitive advice in certain subject areas and it is therefore important that Muslim organisations do professional social work, just as other religious communities do in Germany. Using the BFmF example, it can be shown that professional educational and social work with Muslim sponsorship is both necessary and possible. As religiously and culturally sensitive work, it can complement and support the existing offers of state and independent providers.

The participation of Muslims, especially Muslim women who are perceived as a disadvantaged group, is an important signal both in Muslim communities and in society as a whole. Compared to the social responsibility of mosque communities, which is carried out on a voluntary basis, the BFmF's professional work makes it clear that Muslims, as socially responsible people, not only work for their own community, but for all those in need.

Of course, there is not only one answer to the question of what it means to be open to religious questions in social work. At the least, a sensitive attitude towards religious questions can provide an ability to deal constructively with the reality of life. In this context, it is time to address the question of how social work can successfully shape an assistance process when working with people seeking advice, for whom religious aspects of life matter.

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The Role of *tawba* (Repentance) in Social Work with Muslim Clients

Somaya Abdullah

Abstract For interventions to succeed in social work, practitioners need to be familiar with clients' religious worldviews and value systems; by understanding these dimensions in a client's life, appropriate coping behaviour in the context of their lived experiences can be enhanced. In working with Muslim clients, such intervention requires knowledge and awareness of Islam and of the concepts that Muslims rely on to deal with problems or to bring about change in their lives. These concepts provide a reference and motivation for change to occur and can be integrated into social work to ensure services are culturally sensitive for them. *Tawba* (repentance) is one such concept that is fundamental in Islam; it is considered a starting point for personal change and a means to achieve a new way of being in relation to others and to God. *Tawba* is defined religiously and spiritually; as religious doctrine, sin and transgression are emphasised, while spiritually, inner transformation is the focus. This paper examines the concept of *tawba* and its use in social work to enhance intervention outcomes with Muslim clients.

Keywords Islamic social work · Islam · Repentance · *tawba*

Introduction

It is an important societal need to provide culturally sensitive social work for Muslim clients. In Western secular societies, Muslims face many challenges that make helping interventions necessary. In addition to individual or family problems, their experience is often characterised by social conflicts, negative stereotyping and discrimination which impact their well-being (Chaney & Church, 2017; Guru, 2010; Husain, 2015). Research institutions, such as the Pew Research Centre and Gallup, confirm perceptual and attitudinal differences in relation to Muslims and verify the disadvantage they encounter (Lipka, 2017; Younis, 2015). As more

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Muslims access welfare services under these conditions, appropriately sensitive social work for Muslim clients is crucial. For this service to be effective, the integration of Islamic values and principles into interventions should be taken into consideration.

Various approaches have been proposed to bridge the religious and cultural divides in interventions with Muslim clients in secular contexts. Emphases have been placed on understanding the basic prescripts and practices of Islam related to the foundations of worship, and Muslim family and social life. Practitioners are advised to familiarise themselves with the Pillars of Islam, its Articles of Faith and other core aspects of communal and ritual life throughout the life cycle, including diet, family structure, gender roles, and rites of life and death (Canda & Furman, 2010; Graham et al., 2010; Williams, 2005). Consulting or working with religious scholars or clergy (Imams) to develop cultural competence with Muslim clients is also suggested (Ali, 2016; Al-Krenawi, 2016). Practitioners are discouraged from making assumptions about Muslims based on negative stereotypes, such as generalised associations with violence and terrorism, with sensitivity training suggested to overcome bias (Chaney & Church, 2017; Williams, 2005). In other strategies, comparative perspectives examine equivalence between social work principles, practice techniques, and similar practices in Islam to increase the effectiveness of services to clients (Abdullah, 2014; Hodge, 2019; Husain & Hodge, 2016; Pathan, 2016).

The above strategies ensure that Muslims can access appropriate professional services. However, there is a need to examine Islamic concepts that are deeply connected to Muslim identity and how these can become part of social work intervention as well. These concepts, if overlooked, can create impediments in the helping process, as they are intrinsic to Muslim life and can influence outcomes even when clients do not consciously identify with them. They form part of the Muslim collective consciousness in ways that transcend the individual, whose functioning is nonetheless influenced by them. As such, these Islamic concepts can be a source for positive change because of their religious and cultural relevance. Rajab (2016) supports an approach using focused integration of Islamic concepts in social work, arguing for a conceptual model whereby Islamic concepts are applied in social work, their efficacy tested in practice settings, and their theoretical principles refined as new knowledge emerges from their implementation. In an illustration of this kind of integration, Ahammed (2010) presents Qurʾanic verses as therapeutic metaphors to assist clients; she identifies verses related to, for example, descriptions of the light of God or the phases of the moon or scattered ashes, for use as symbolic representations which provide spiritual guidance to clients to help deal with emotional turmoil or personal problems. At a social level, Islamic and cultural concepts like *ṣulḥ* and *muṣālaḥa* (peacemaking and reconciliation), *taḥkīm* (arbitration) and *wiṣāṭa* (mediation) have been identified as significant for conflict resolution in communities and families (Ozcelik, 2006). In one instance, mediation on this basis was successfully integrated into professional social work practice, in a Bedouin-Arab community in the Negev (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001).

This chapter aims to contribute to this approach by examining the concept of *tawba* in Islam and its inclusion in social work to enhance intervention outcomes with Muslim clients. *Tawba* is a core Islamic construct that structures ethical conduct in human relationships as well as the human relationship with God. Although it is described as repentance and is associated with sin and judgment, it is a much more nuanced concept, through which an intricate interaction of human repentance and divine forgiveness unfolds (Khalil, 2009) and which Ayoub (1997, 108) asserts is the cornerstone of faith, law and piety in Islam. At an individual level, *tawba* is the first step in personal change. This change is constructed as a transformation of the self toward a state of spiritual centredness that connects the person to God. The Islamic belief that humans are born pure and without sin, but in life and over time can become alienated from this inner state and therefore spiritually isolated from God, underlies this view (Mohamed, 1996). Repentance, then, is the door to divine mercy (Ayoub, 1997) that reconnects the person to God. At communal and societal levels, *tawba* has implications of accountability where harm has been inflicted upon others. Here *tawba* shifts into the public domain in the practice of Islamic Law (Shariʿa), particularly criminal law, where crimes and moral transgressions are defined and their punishment determined. This is an area of scholarly contestation, but *tawba* is a decisive factor in how offences are dealt with, to allow those who offend the opportunity to redeem themselves in relation to others and ultimately in relation to God. Overall, whether individual or societal, *tawba* is a mechanism for achieving the goal of living in submission to God's will, which is the defining character of being Muslim. To assess the role of *tawba* in social work, this chapter will firstly provide an overview of the concept and its definition. An outline of its respective religious and spiritual formulations, of repenting from sin and beginning inner transformation, will follow. The chapter will conclude by examining possibilities for the use of *tawba* in social work, focusing on its meaning, practitioner-client interactions, and broad practice principles from its interpretations, which can be applied to form a framework which facilitates the change process.

The Concept of *tawba* in Islam

Repentance is a religious concept that, at a basic level, means an expression of regret or remorse. It is generally associated with sin, for which confession and making amends to God is required (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2013). In Islam, *tawba* is a comparable concept and although associated with repentance, it is a multifaceted concept that only indirectly refers to regret (Khalil, 2009, 22). As Khalil (2012, 296) points out: "While repentance can function as a viable translation of *tawba* in most cases, it does occasionally obscure the deeper semantic nuances of the term which accent not an emotional experience but an ethical or moral directional reorientation." *Tawba* therefore is an important instrument for ethical conduct in Islam and the ways in which it is interpreted, including its lexical, religious and practical dimensions, reflects this complex nature.

Lexically, *tawba* means "turn" or "return" (Khalil, 2006, 403) or "frequently returning to" (Ayoub, 1997, 97). Through its grammatical patterns, it refers to purifying intentions and mending one's ways (Zilio-Grandi, 2013) and incorporates related traits including mercy, forgiveness and pardon, all of which occur in a dynamic interaction between humans and God (Khalil, 2009); even though it is related to sin, Ayoub (1997) observes that its deeper meaning is more about returning to God in devotion than repenting from sin. The importance of *tawba* in Islam is conveyed through its many occurrences in the Qurʾan. With its correlates it is referenced eighty-seven times (Ayoub, 1997, 98) and Surah nine, titled *at-tawba* is a wider reference to the theme in the context of challenges faced by Muslims in the early establishment of Islam (Al-Ghazali, 2000). Qurʾanic verses that expound on *tawba* include "And he who repents and does righteousness does indeed turn to Allah with [accepted] repentance" (Q 25:71)[1] and, "And return to your Lord time after time and submit to Him before there comes to you the punishment, then you shall not be helped." (Q 39:54) In addition to the Qurʾan, the narrated words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammed (*Hadith*) portray him as being in a constant state of repentance, turning to God and seeking repentance over seventy times a day and lauding the repentant person whom God looks on favourably (Sahih al-Bukhari 6307, 2020).

From this doctrinal perspective, *tawba* refers to both humans and God, which Khalil (2009, 33) describes as human *tawba* and divine *tawba*. For humans, it means a return to God from sin or disobedience, while in reference to God, return is a divine act, whereby God turns to humans in forgiveness and compassion (Khalil, 2006; Rubin, 2004; Zilio-Grandi, 2013). Drawing on a text of the eminent scholar of classical Islam, al-Ghazali, Stern (1979, 591) describes *tawba* as a conversion away from error or negative behaviour towards an awareness of God that follows three consecutive steps: knowledge, regret, and action. The person comprehends the extent of her or his wrongdoing, experiences the emotional impact of their action through remorse, and redirects herself or himself away from past actions while striving not to repeat them.

At this human level, *tawba* is also part of Islamic Law relating to sin, offences against others and their punishment. Sin in Islam ranges from religious oversights including moving away from the path of God, to intentional misdeeds and acts of evil (Simon, 2003). Within this domain, violations are classed as those that affect the rights of God, usually duties and responsibilities of worship that require accountability to God, and those that affect the rights of others, like public actions of harm (Ḥusain, 1969; Nanji, 2007). For the former, there are condemnations and warnings, but laws for punishments are not prescribed, as accountability to God is an individual matter between the person and God. Regarding the latter, harsh penalties with threats of eternal damnation in the hereafter are prescribed. However, *tawba* remains a factor in determining how penalties are metered out, as well as in securing Divine forgiveness (Ḥusain, 1969). Committing an offence against others adds an

[1] All the Qurʾan translations in this chapter derive from https://quran.com/

additional dimension that requires seeking forgiveness from those against whom an act of wrongdoing has been committed (Uyun et al., 2019). A victim's forgiveness is a factor in securing God's forgiveness, as a violation against a person is an affront to God whose laws forbid the harm of others. In this overall framework, Nanji (2007, 321) explains that a person who commits a sin "is one who acts out of ignorance or wilfulness, inflicting material or spiritual harm on him or herself or on others". The implications of such actions are inner turmoil and alienation from God (Khalil, 2006; Stern, 1979), for which *tawba* is a means to resolve and to return to the conduct required by Islam.

When *tawba* refers to God, it refers to a merciful and forgiving God who is responsive to human repentance (Ayoub, 1997). As the person turns or returns from sin or error in repentance to God, there is a reciprocal divine turn or return towards the person in compassion. This divine turning, as Khalil (2009, 17) explains, may be from divine wrath to divine mercy, or rejection to acceptance or punishment to forgiveness. It is based on mercy and grace from God for the benefit of the person and the development of his or her soul. This turning can also take the form of a separate Divine intervention, as though it was by divine favour or mercy that a person is directed to repent in the first place (Khalil, 2009), or what Rubin (2004, 427) refers to as "the first cause that generates repentance". Divine repentance is not then equivalent to human repentance, as God is regarded as the ultimate Being and therefore beyond the characteristics of human fallibility and accountability which repentance implies. The divine turning of God to the repentant person is also not a given; human repentance must be deeply sincere and illustrated through appropriate actions that have to be sustained. Thus repenting and subsequently sinning in a cyclical manner is viewed as a mockery (Ayoub, 1997), which the Qurʾan forbids, saying "And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says: Surely now I repent (…)." (Q 4:8) This is embodied in the person of the Pharaoh in the Qurʾanic narrative of the prophet Moses: after several warnings to repent, and doing so only in the face of death, he is denied divine forgiveness (Q 10:90–92).

Tawba as Spiritual Transformation

Tawba is a requirement to turn from sin and wrongdoing in the profane world but is also considered a first step in inner spiritual transformation. This view is grounded in Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), the mystical tradition of Islam. Sufism emphasises a mystical interpretation of the Qurʾan and Sunna (prophetic example) and ongoing spiritual development toward the realisation of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) (Chittick, 2000; Danner, 1987). This process takes the form of a path upon which an individual embarks with the assistance of a Sufi Sheikh as a guide, towards an elevated level of spirituality. In this quest, the worshipper moves from being a novice to an advanced spiritual state to attain a sense of nearness to God. The process commences with *tawba*. Al-Ba'uniyyah (2014, 33) stresses the essence of *tawba* as the starting point

or first principle of the Sufi path, noting that it is only through 'the door of repentance' and maintaining the principles of repentance that the mystical stages of Sufism can be entered into. Through subsequent acts of worship, the Sufi progresses through various stages to a fully spiritual life which culminates in the annihilation of the self (*fanā'*) and constant God-consciousness. The spiritual stages in Sufism vary, but common features include the negation of the material world, contemplation, and especially invocation and the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) (Nasr, 1987; Zeki, 2018).

The purpose of Sufism is the destruction of the ego through devotional acts that aim to reduce the experience of existential separation from God (Aslan, 2005; Derin, 2009). The Islamic position on human nature and the purpose of humankind provide the framework for its practice. Islam refers to peace, safety and submission and the means to submit or surrender to the will of God (Ali & Leaman, 2008; Siddiqui, 1997). Submission to God's will is considered the purpose of humankind; a Muslim is one who submits accordingly and whose life is regulated by the principles and practices of Islam for which the Qur'an is a guide. The Qur'anic narratives of creation and of the fall of Adam provide the archetypal context for attaining the goal of submission to God. According to this narrative, God creates humans, who in a primordial covenant, agree to be the guardians of the Qur'an and to implement the will of God on earth (Rahman 1989) This then becomes the measure by which Muslims will be judged in life and in the hereafter. The complexity of this task is illustrated through the story of the fall of Adam. God creates Adam to whom the angels are commanded to bow down. Satan (*iblīs*) refuses and is therefore expelled from paradise, but vows to be an eternal force of provocation for humans to distract them from the path of God (Nanji 2007; Rahman 1989).

The first illustration of this action is in the deception of Adam and Eve, whom he draws into disobeying God. Moving from a state of purity to fallibility, they too have to exit paradise and the fall becomes symbolic of human fallibility and vulnerability to sin. Adam repents, which God accepts, and Adam is symbolic of the first sinner, the first to repent and the first whose repentance is accepted by God (Ayoub, 1997). This narrative provides a framework for humans to understand the ever-present risk of being tempted not to live in submission to God, which the Qur'an cautions against saying:

> Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you as he brought your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their garments to show them their shameful parts. Surely, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you see them not. We have made the Satans the friends of those who do not believe. (Q 7:27)

The Islamic representation of human nature adds a psychological dimension to the creation and fall narrative and is the point where the transformation of the self is centred. In this model, humans are created in a state of purity (*fiṭra*) and with a divine spirit (*rūḥ*). These innate forces positively influence efforts toward spiritual transformation. They are linked to the heart (*qalb*), which is the centre of emotions and moral judgement. Human behaviour is indicative of the state of the heart, so that a sincere heart reflects sound actions, and an 'impure' heart reflects otherwise

(Abdullah, 2014; Ajmal, 1987; Mohamed 1996). Further within this structure, is the *nafs* or self. The *nafs* consists of three innate drives or human tendencies which are *an-nafs al-'ammāra* (the lower self), *an-nafs al-lawwāma* (a self that instils conscience) and *an-nafs al-muṭma'inna* (a self at peace) (Ajmal, 1987). The lower self is an egotistic self, with an impulse towards expressing desires, and is an ongoing obstacle to attaining spiritual progress that has to be overcome. If achieved, the person moves through the other levels of the *nafs* to eventually align her or his heart, spirit, and original purity to experience the spiritual realities of the oneness of God (Ajmal, 1987; Nasr, 1987).

The struggle to overcome the self is associated with jihad (Ashraf, 1987). Jihad means striving or striving to the utmost in any matter (Aslan, 2005; Aydin, 2012). According to al-Ghazzali, jihad consists of two levels of struggle, the lesser jihad (*jihād al-aṣġar*) and the greater jihad (*jihād al-akbar*) (Bonner, 2006; Cook, 2015). The lesser jihad refers to external conditions related to defensive combat and war; it is justified in circumstances of oppression with strict related conventions like securing the safety of civilians and places of worship (Aslan, 2005). The greater jihad is the individual struggle to overcome the lower self and achieve a constant state of God-consciousness and as a result, live in submission to God. Jihad, therefore, is always an effort towards God, to re-establish one's relationship with the Divine (Aslan, 2005; Renard, 1988). To do so, struggling against an instinctive drive and the ever-present *iblīs* in action, makes it an ultimate jihad, with the annihilation of the self being the goal of Sufism.

Tawba and Social Work

The integration of *tawba* in social work links to a broader debate on the inclusion of religion in social work. Religion and spirituality serve fundamental functions in life that intersect with the values of social work. They are instrumental in supporting the human impulse to connect with the sacred or a higher power and help in the quest for existential meaning (Cox, 2017; Hodge & McGrew, 2006). Religion can also provide comfort in dealing with life's uncertainties, as well as offering ways for adherents of a faith to chart a desired life course (Cox, 2017). At personal levels, religion and spirituality can enhance coping mechanisms, while socially they influence compassionate relatedness toward others and support socially beneficial behaviours, such as those that serve humanitarian ends (Jensen, 2020). These transcendent aspects of religion and spirituality can enhance professional competence in social work and have been embraced by the profession in different areas of care and service provision across the lifespan (Canda, 1999; Furness & Gilligan, 2010; Graham & Shier, 2009; Reese, 2011; Seinfeld, 2012; Sheridan et al., 1994). They play an important part in social work and are requirements of social work codes of ethics (Hodge, 2018) to ensure effective, culturally sensitive services to diverse clients.

Organised religion, however, presents challenges for social work and has been a point of historical tension in the profession (Canda, 2005; Kriegelstein, 2006; Praglin, 2004; Sheridan et al., 1994; Streets, 2009; Spencer, 1956). In organised religion, shared faith, beliefs, and values are central, along with guidelines for appropriate actions for daily living for an anticipated afterlife. Adherents characteristically follow texts and rituals and participate in prescribed acts of worship as an expression of their faith (Hodge, 2019; Walsh, 2016). Spiritual practices, although more focused on transcendent realities, can likewise be structured through ritual acts of devotion. Where rigid requirements exist for believers to function within these systems as the only acceptable form of worship, a lack of conformity can lead to judgement and exclusion. Furthermore, when organised religious systems are based on a shared identity that binds a community, and the construction of these group identities are negatively reinforced in relation to others, social division and conflict can occur (Cox, 2017; Jensen, 2020). Religion and spirituality in their organised forms within social work raise questions about their viability in practice, because of the contrasting orientations of these systems.

Tawba as part of social work brings to the fore the dilemma of integrating a distinctive religious construct into social work as a secular service. *Tawba* is the first principle of change in Islam and is important to consider in working with Muslim clients. If overlooked, social work will be limited in its response to the lived realities of its Muslims clients, for whom repentance as an act of devotion, personal responsibility and interpersonal conflict resolution is a deeply rooted part of religious and cultural life and consciousness. However, *tawba* also has connotations of sin and judgement and is specific in its Islamic focus and practice. This form contrasts with the secular value system of social work where social workers are required to be non-judgmental and provide services to clients objectively and without proselytising. When working with religion and spirituality in practice, they cannot instruct clients in religion nor judge them by the principles of their faith.

Substance abuse, which is an area of frequent intervention in social work, is a case which illustrates the complexity of this situation. Islam forbids the use of alcohol and drugs; they are classed as intoxicants, the use of which affects cognitive and spiritual functioning, and hence their relationship with God. Its outcomes are also considered to be socially disruptive. In its ban, the Qurʾan forbids only alcohol, but this directive is extended by the Islamic legal practice of analogy (*qiyās*) to drug use, as it is seen as having a similar effect and being likewise harmful to society. It is therefore considered, both a sin and a crime with respective theological and legal implications. In classical Islamic law (Shariʿa), the penalty for alcohol and drug use is corporal punishment (Ali, 2014). As with all sins in Islam, *tawba* is necessary to allow the person to return to God.

Despite the Islamic rules on alcohol and drug use, many Muslim communities face problems of substance abuse. When these circumstances affect social work intervention spaces, practitioners, including Muslim social workers, cannot enforce Islamic law, nor moralize about *tawba* as a religious devotional practice. A balance which reconciles these disparate systems in working with Muslim clients, including avowed Muslims whose preference is for Islamic intervention in a professional

setting, is needed, if culturally sensitive services are to be provided with reference to religious concepts. This applies across a spectrum of social problems that Muslims experience. The following section examines such social work practices pertaining to the concept of *tawba*.

Tawba in Social Work Practice

The following strategies are suggested in the case of *tawba*: the aim is to draw on the wider principles and spirit of *tawba*, to assist Muslim clients from a perspective that resonates with their experiences and to initiate change from the starting point required in Islam. These strategies, include a focus on the meaning of *tawba* as 'return', using the practitioner-client interaction to explore *tawba* in mutual problem assessment and intervention design, and extracting preliminary practice principles from the interpretations of *tawba* for use as a framework to sustain the client's change.

When social workers first meet with clients, the holistic assessment of presenting problems and their contexts, together with the design of suitable interventions are essential (Hodge, 2018). With Muslim clients, this needs to include thorough assessment of the religious values and practices with which the client identifies (Warden et al., 2017; Barise, 2005). The exploration of *tawba* can be part of this assessment to direct the intervention. *Tawba* can be introduced into the process by focusing on its meaning of 'return' to redirect the client toward change. The client could be encouraged to reflect on her or his situation and the idea of turning towards a new way of being. Through this emphasis, practitioners will be able to connect to a familiar religious and cultural value and assess its design in the intervention. The emphasis on 'return' avoids imposing religion or its requirements for practice onto the client; and it makes the process inclusive to accommodate Muslims at different levels of faith and practice. The theological dimension of 'return', as a turning to God or God-consciousness does not have to be excluded. It can be explored as part of the wider assessment of the client's understanding of his or her circumstances through the practitioner-client interaction.

Where clients and practitioners hold different value systems there are risks of damaging the helping relationship or causing harm to clients as a result of spiritual insensitivity (Hodge, 2018). However, this interaction can also lead to mutually beneficial outcomes in achieving the intervention goals; with effective practice, clients can benefit from culturally sensitive services while social workers could enhance their knowledge and skills by engaging with the client's worldview. Kriegelstein (2006, 26) describes this practitioner-client engagement as the basis of "relational spirituality", in which a mutual transformation of consciousness can occur for both the social worker and the client. Hodge (2018, 134) likewise identifies this interaction as a site of spiritual competence in practice. He argues that spiritual competence rests on practitioner self-knowledge, a strengths-based understanding of the client's spiritual worldview, and the related design of the

intervention. A feature of this spiritual competence that practitioners should display is "epistemological humility", which requires them to show a collaborative attitude that gives preference to the client's experiences and constructs the intervention on this basis. In a similar manner, Knitter (2010) proposes that social workers engage in religious dialogue with clients to support intervention.

The practitioner-client relationship can be a space to explore the client's understanding of *tawba* and to assess relevant interventions in relation to the client's circumstances. Discussion could include how the client relates to *tawba* as a return to God or God-consciousness and the understanding of their problems as sin or wrongdoing, whether as personal error or as harm directed at others. Where clients link their problems to sin, practitioners could further assess any perceived need to undertake corrective action. Khalil (2009) explains that *tawba* is not only meant to be psychological or emotional but, depending on circumstances, must co-occur with restorative actions that rectify or eliminate the discord that has emerged because of ethical or religious wrongdoing. The Qur'an does not specify the acts that must accompany *tawba* (Khalil, 2009) but fasting, charity, and especially a two-unit prayer called "*ṣalāt al-tawba*" (prayer of *tawba*) serve a compensatory function in performing *tawba* (Talmon-Heller, 2009). Socially, communal gestures of regret where restitution is needed, and charitable gift-giving can also function as concrete displays of its expression (Abu-Nimer & Nasser, 2013). The competence that is needed to facilitate such action requires an in-depth knowledge of Islam. Where this is lacking, social workers could engage clergy and Islamic scholars or consult with them in this determination. This is especially needed when the assessment process reveals an expressed preference by the client for an Islamic-based intervention. In this capacity, Imams provide an important attendant service for intervention, outside of their role as clergy who conduct sermons and perform religious rituals, in different fields in social welfare involving Muslim clients (Ali, 2016; Al-Krenawi, 2016; Padela et al., 2011). Consultation with qualified persons or experts to ensure appropriate services to clients is also a feature of spiritual competence that is encouraged (Hodge, 2018).

Not all Muslims will relate to *tawba* in the same way. In addition to emphasising 'return' and exploring the religious dimensions of *tawba* with clients, extracting broader principles from its interpretations is something that could be used to support a range of Muslim clients. Among Muslim communities, the practice of Islam or more generally Muslim cultural life, is diverse; it includes ritual practices, transcendent spiritual beliefs in the self and God, and ideological standpoints that influence Muslims' expression of Islam as faith and practice. Despite this diversity, concepts like *tawba* are part of a common belief system and shared familiarity in Muslim culture and tradition. Drawing on the interpretations of *tawba*, the following initial set of principles are suggested as a framework for practice that social workers could use as a reference with different Muslim clients:

- A new orientation
- Commitment to change
- Resolute striving

- Personal responsibility
- Valuing the other
- Spiritual relatedness

These principles reflect the values and spirit of *tawba*. Clients at different levels of identification with Islam and Muslim life would be able to utilise them equally to support change in their lives. They are inferred from core elements of *tawba* and are not prescriptive; within the interpretations of *tawba,* alternatives can be explored for context-specific responses.

The proposed strategies, overall, provide options for the inclusion of repentance in social work that could ensure culturally sensitive services for Muslim clients. Their significance is underscored by how Muslims relate to *tawba* as an act of piety and cultural affinity. Muslims are encouraged to routinely perform *tawba* even for minor infractions and are exhorted to constantly seek God's forgiveness. These values are inculcated from childhood (Abu-Nimer & Nasser, 2013) and become part of a greater consciousness of how one is expected to act in relation to others and in relation to God. As already indicated, the Prophet himself is said to have been in a state of constant *tawba* and had declared himself as the Prophet of repentance (Khalil, 2009, 2). For prophets, whom God may declare free of major sin, *tawba* can be primarily an act of devotion (Ayoub, 1997); for humans influenced by an innately fallible nature and environmental forces that can easily draw them into deviating from the Islamic path, *tawba* is a constant, and a form of striving to return to the path of Islam (Brohi, 1987, 70), to which Muslims are expected to direct themselves consistently.

Conclusion

Social work considers many facets of diversity in intervention. Where religion is the focus it is important to draw on the positive aspects of religious worldviews to ensure services to clients that are compatible with their belief systems. This chapter has explored the role of *tawba* in social work, highlighting possibilities for its inclusion in work with Muslim clients. By integrating *tawba* at different levels of intervention, Muslim clients can be assured of services that are appropriate to their religious and spiritual needs.

Tawba can serve an important function in initiating individual change for Muslim clients who face challenges in their lives. By referencing this concept in intervention, the practitioner will be able to assist clients from the perspective of their religious and cultural realities and utilise concepts that are familiar to them in their development. The approach is an important part of cultural competence, which is a requirement of social work. It is linked to other principles of cultural competence, such as a strengths perspective and person-centred intervention. On this basis, practitioners would be able to provide a culturally sensitive service to Muslim clients.

In addition, *tawba* has many positive principles emanating from its different interpretations that practitioners can draw on to support appropriate intervention. An underlying philosophy of personal accountability and respect for the rights of others that should be upheld within the bigger context of human relations with God, provide for a morally binding commitment that can help the client focus on change. As a purely devotional practice, it would not be suitable for social work. This relates both the expectation regarding counselling on religion, which is outside the role of social work, and the awareness of an intricate concept which would be well beyond the knowledge of majority of social workers. Nonetheless, it is possible to integrate *tawba* into social work through adapting its design for practice.

This approach would require astute discernment from practitioners. At the very start, the discomfort of an automatic association of *tawba* with sin and judgement, which could create justified resistance, would need to be addressed. This is part of setting up a suitable atmosphere for intervention, which is a basic requirement of social work. After this, practitioners could assess the principles to apply, the depth of the engagement that would be needed on the topic, and a suitable intervention in relation to the clients' problems. This is critical if *tawba* is to be a strategy in practice. Clients who access services are among the most vulnerable members of society. Inappropriately advising repentance would undermine the intervention and only serve to blame those who suffer in society and are victims of oppression. Muslims who seek social work service due to circumstances of disadvantage or dire social circumstances cannot be expected to engage in *tawba* as repentance. 'Return' to direct a new path for the client may be more suitable. Instilling the message of spiritual hope that *tawba* implies could be similarly suitable. Blumenthal (2005) provides insights to this approach in an example of gender-based violence. In a discussion of repentance in Judaism (*Teshuva*) he explains that a woman who has been battered by a husband and abused by a father is not obliged to forgive the abuser, if he does not repent sincerely through the key steps of repentance as required in Judaism. In a similar vein, victims and survivors of gender-based violence cannot be advised to perform *tawba* or to repent as an intervention strategy.

The proposal for *tawba* in social work is complex regardless. As a theological concept the direct integration of *tawba* in the secular environment of social work is not feasible; instead, adapting its focus while still retaining its core values could facilitate culturally sensitive services for Muslim clients. By emphasising its values and principles, depending on the client's identification and responsiveness to it, intervention can be designed to fit the needs of the client. Even so, it is a concept that focusses on the individual and her or his personal moral and religious transformation. It is therefore restricted in its ability to deal with the social problems to which Muslims are subjected. Concerted efforts will be needed if Muslims are to deal with the many problems hey face beyond individual transformation. The way *tawba* calls for accountability for acts of harm committed against others does give it the potential to extend beyond the practitioner-client interaction to social and communal environments. This would still be at the level of individual action that social workers could facilitate. Untested in practice, it remains a risk for intervention. Rajab's (2016) view of the implementation of Islamic concepts and refining them on an ongoing basis, through lessons learnt in the process, would be a good point of departure.

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Islamic Principles, Inclusivity and Revitalisation in Conceptual Frameworks for Western Social Work

Sara Ashencaen Crabtree

Abstract In considering the important contribution of Islamic principles and perspectives to social work, which has encompassed to-date both the etic (outsider) and an emic (insider) positionality, a dialectical stance is offered in this chapter. This takes a fused 'etemic' approach, where Islamic religious and cultural concepts are critically examined in a dialogical application towards and excursus of an adaptive understanding of how these abstracted notions can play out within a social work context. To this end, the following concepts: *ʾumma*, *zakat*, *ʿizza* and *al-insān al-kāmil*, which are Islamic beliefs or Muslim cultural practices, are discussed as offering powerful and evocative socio-cultural-religious constructs that can serve to illuminate professional social work. Such insights, however, are subject to caveats and qualifications regarding the contentious appropriateness of this kind of abstracted, discursive application as well as whether such concepts can or should be adopted in some fashion within social work. However, the International Federation of Social Work's (IFSW) global definition of social work provides a useful porous framework for such a legitimate exercise in the IFSW's attempts to depart from narrow ethnocentricism to both recognise and embrace the cultural diversity that constitutes this global profession.

Keywords Islamic principles · IFSW · Dialectics · Social work

Introduction

The growing social work interest in Islamic principles and perspectives has largely focused on two trends to-date; firstly, promoting an understanding of what these entail in order to better orient the etic (outsider) perspective towards developing greater cultural awareness and sensitivity. Secondly, the development of a reflexive dialogical forum, where Muslim academics (primarily) have sought to contribute to social work paradigms by adding Islamic approaches and lenses to mainstream

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models from an emic (insider) position. In this chapter, a dialectical position is taken which draws from each of these two different emic and etic impulses in what (Heaslip et al., 2016) describe as a fused, 'etemic' model. Here the question is posed regarding what it may mean to incorporate Islamic precepts and values into current social work normative practices.

This endeavour consciously avoids a rehearsal of the conventional comparative exercise towards religiously-based values and those of social work (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). Instead, religious and cultural concepts that dictate, prescribe or proscribe normative behaviour are reflectively explored here in relation to contemporary social work practice. Through this somewhat unfamiliar, and occasionally, unapologetically jarring juxtapositioning of normativities, the discursive space for a new discourse emerges. In consequence, from this location social work ontologies can be viewed more clearly as both constructed and constrained 'givens', from where 'other' value systems are scrutinised, in effect a professional ethnocentricism. The etemic lens enables a dialectical transformation to occur where these 'othered' schemas and ontologies are applied to survey social work from an alternative position where the familiar and assumed is rendered unfamiliar and morphologically permeable.

Progressive International Agendas and Sociopolitical Obstacles

Historically, social work has travelled a convoluted journey and this within a comparatively short space of time, to emerge with an ambitious articulation of itself as an international, global profession embracing plural practices within one unified corpus. On this pan-global journey, social work's origins can be traced from centuries-old fragmented, localised and religious-based care towards qualified, expert-based, secular and human-rights orientated operations (Payne, 2005); returning now to a strong interest in recognising and accommodating the domains of spirituality and faith (Parker et al., 2018). This spiralling evolution in the profession is briefly discussed with the aim of providing a contextual platform from which to critically reflect on the religio-cultural concepts familiar to Muslims universally.

Here the International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW) global definition provides useful discursive ground for a discussion of the hypothetical inclusion and adaptation of reframed Islamic concepts into the profession for wider social work engagement with values and diversity (IFSW, 2014). While it is not suggested that a wholesale adoption of unfamiliar and religious precepts is automatically beneficial to social work (and indeed there are many caveats to observe in any such undertaking), exploring different perspectives as potential assets can strengthen the profession when threatened by uneven professional progress globally, along with the hazards of tenuous identity and the fragmentation of its autonomy, as is explained further.

Paths towards enhanced living by individuals, families and communities are multiple and complex, in being shaped by sociocultural forces and political constraints that enable or disable individuals, families and communities. The IFSW (2014) global definition of the profession provides a useful reference point for expanding the wider inclusion of indigenous knowledge in social work to include religio-cultural perspectives, which could be argued to be implicit to an understanding of what indigenous beliefs may entail:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels. (IFSW, 2014)

If we assume, as the IFSW proposes, that social work is indeed a global profession (rather than a plurality of globally disconnected, welfare-orientated, social impulses), then a unified profession could be visualised as one bearing multiple heads bending in different directions, according to the environmental milieu and the vectors of national priorities and concerns. Yet the corpus of social work is, albeit not uncontestably, composed of a vast, complex but generally unified, organic whole. It both embodies and emanates those social work principles, values and codes of ethical conduct that the IFSW would seek to recognise as representing the global profession across the entire entity.

Although this is an affirming and idealised vision of the profession, we must also fully acknowledge the tensions inherent in social work, as both an instrument of the state, as well as a valuable, empowering and subversive tool for those it serves: clients, service users and communities, including practitioners themselves (Parker & Doel, 2013). These tensions are not held in equal balance but are weighted and slanted according to the pressures exerted within societies.

Although social work history carries some notorious examples of dramatic and catastrophic failings in the profession, more prosaic examples can also illuminate the pernicious and insidious effects of social milieus of discrimination and oppression, clarifying how these are played out in social work. The therapeutic or community-empowering role of practitioners can often be eclipsed by a policing role – a necessary function in many ways, but which also acts as a prism of suspicion through which groups may be judged as deficient or dysfunctional. It has now been many decades since the new professional zeitgeist prompted Lena Dominelli (1994) to raise awareness of institutionalised racism in, predominantly, White middle class British social work's interactions with Black, predominantly working class families.

Today, Muslim minority ethnic (ME) groups occupy a somewhat similar terrain, as requiring extra state attention and scrutiny, where social work treads an uneasy path (Guru, 2012). The position of Muslim ME groups in Europe can be said to be that of the outsider – more or less tolerated according to each society, but where generally such groups occupy lower socio-economic strata compared to the general

population, with a concomitant relationship to higher unemployment and lower education status (Bowen et al., 2013; Calvo et al., 2014; Grosfoguel & Mielants, 2006; MCB, 2015). Nor is the private domain of the home immune from state surveillance, for in the UK, for example, Muslim parenting has been problematised as being a contributory factor in inculcating beliefs and practices that are framed as opposed to prevailing social values (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). This view of Muslim parenting as forming a potential security risk has become the focus of British counter-terrorism policies that seek to identify radicalisation at source (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2017) with a particular and pernicious focus on the so-called 'radicalisation' of Muslim youth (Hargreaves, 2018). Here social work, the teaching and health professions are viewed as having an important, surveillance state role to play.

In contrast to the general acceptance of other ME groups in Britain, the position of Muslims remains on the tenuous margins of inclusion. Islamophobia and state suspicion has increased a sense of isolation and vulnerability among Muslim ME groups in which social work has been implicated (Guru, 2012). Such individuals and groups are consequently subject to shifting discourses surrounding questions of identity, belonging, rights and citizenship, in conjunction with the perception and experience of marginalisation (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2014, 2017).

Compounding the impact of intolerance and prejudice, decades of neo-liberal ideologies spreading unevenly across the Global North, have caused gradual withdrawing of state support in citizens' lives and the associated inexorable emptying of the public purse. So-called financial 'cutbacks' imposed by governments fray the fabric of society still further, exacerbating social tensions that in turn create resentment as well as deprivation (Standing, 2011; Fukuyama, 2018). Esping-Anderson's (1990) typologies of European welfare may still carry recognisable features, and while state generosity varies widely across nations, the neo-liberal ideology of austerity has crippled public services in other countries, leaving many people without the support services they desperately need (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018).

Social Work Responses: Pedagogy and Practice

Individual social workers are, of course, in the frontline of dealing with the impact of such privation. Nonetheless, however committed to the values and ethics of the profession and to anti-oppressive approaches they may be, social workers are normally part of bureaucracies underpinning service development and provision, which are now often part of the problem rather than the solution (Parker & Doel, 2013). Challenging prescribed notions of social work, as endorsed in professional education, is problematic in practice contexts, where the individual is dwarfed in comparison with the state-mandated Goliath which has the power to dictate what professional practice should look like, who 'deserves' services and who should be monitored by 'services'. Today, unlike many of its European neighbours (Parker & Doel, 2013), social work in England has become increasingly circumscribed and is

now focused on ‘safeguarding’ in child and adult services. Such a prescriptive social work role primarily focuses on ‘negative freedoms’, to paraphrase the philosopher, Isaiah Berlin (1969). These constitute freedoms *from* being maltreated, abused or killed, which although obviously of critical importance, do not address those positive freedoms that are allied to initiating possibilities that help people to more than *survive* in life, but actually to *thrive.* Moreover, there is a tendency to shape social work students and pedagogic content to the form dictated by employers for *their* purposes, rather than to strive to actively meet and surpass global professional standards to the wider benefit of society (Lyons & Manion, 2004).

Accordingly, even the most aware and skilled of social workers may find themselves operating in milieus and organisational structures that may not of themselves be particularly enlightened or emancipatory. Most practitioners carry out their functions within agencies that are directly or indirectly influenced by the state. There are but few examples of social workers operating autonomously and they practice at an individualistic rather than corporate level (Tucker et al., 2006). Even those operating as independent, private practitioners in the US now function in a national context that most liberal Europeans would regard as both internally and internationally representing a highly divisive and dangerous political regime (Fukuyama, 2018).

Dehumanised ‘Others’

The hazards are all the greater therefore for ME groups who are deliberately targeted by irresponsible political leaders as dehumanised objects for public contempt and fear. Muslims are among the primary targets of such inflammatory rhetoric. Migration, as well as terrorism both abroad and at home, has been constructed as the dominant problem upon which much political rhetoric and policy is aired; particularly if this refers to Muslim migrants fleeing from parts of the world riven by terrible conflicts and violence, economic and ecological hardship, bigotry and persecution (Bowen et al., 2013).

Impeached US President, Donald Trump, has become notorious for divisive pronouncements as well as highly controversial actions that are perceived to be profoundly hostile to Muslim-dominated nations. Boris Johnson, the populist British Prime Minister, and himself no stranger to Islamophobic posturing, was reported as the source of a recent 375% rise in hate crimes following a typically facetious comment concerning Muslim women. His comments added to the impression in the UK that Muslims are essentially different and potentially aggressive and therefore open to pre-emptive attack. In the UK, so entrenched is a negative attitude towards Muslim citizens particularly and ME groups generally, that within the governing party in Britain, Baroness Warsi, a Muslim peer, has called the Conservative Party “institutionally Islamophobic.” (Sabbagh, 2018) In the December 2019 UK General Elections, the crushing defeat landed on the Opposition Labour Party under Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, was thought to be partially owing to accusations of anti-Semitism in the Party, although Labour was often viewed in the past as a natural

home for many Jewish voters. Both these trends are arguably not a coincidence but part of a much bigger, nationalistic, and polarised xenophobic trend infecting Europe today, and other former bastions of democratic tolerance and multiculturalism, now moving towards demonising citizen 'others' as different and unequal.

What lessons for social work can therefore be learned from Muslims? This rhetorical question is posed in the pedagogic light, embraced by many in social work, of the great value of learning directly from service users, who are experts about their own lives and conditions (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018). What new insights can social workers gain from seeing through lenses that are inspired by religious conviction in their ubiquitous interactions with the social world – interactions that are ideally viewed as a means to a daily enacting of grace.

One must of course not over-romanticise piety given, as we know, the many evil deeds performed in its name. However, inspiration and elevation for practitioners can be achieved by reflecting upon the diverse and different ways of being and seeing, in which empathy, so much spoken of in social work, can be employed as the epistemological means through which we can, if only temporarily, step into this other ontology of being.

Social Work and Faith

In reviewing the development of social work from its earliest professional incarnation, two examples are normally mentioned: firstly, the case work-focused British Charity Organisation Society of 1869 and later, the development of social work in the USA through Jane Addams (Frampton, 2019). However, these cannot be separated from a far older history of social and medical welfare in Europe, including institutional care. Those early roots of care were grounded in faith as practiced within the enclosed male and female orders of the Church, although in Arab dominated societies, such as Moorish Spain, skilled, specialised hospitals prophesied the later dominance of medical expertise (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016).

This historical purview enables us to place the religiously influenced ideas of the great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, and the focus on valuing moral agency, as making a huge contribution to social work ethics (Banks, 2006). The profound contribution made by Felix Biestek (1961), a former Catholic priest, developed further the ethical social work relationship, portrayed as the client's or service user's quest for restoration or reformation of the self, ultimately towards growth and wholeness – with or without the help of a deity.

Although welfare and indeed social work itself originally grew out of established religious commitment (Prochaska, 2006), it was during the second half of the twentieth century that these religious roots began to be viewed as anachronistic and irrelevant to a human rights-based discourse. Religion and faith would be dismissed in the Westernised profession as irrelevant baggage that served, if indeed it had any point at all, to maintain an entrenched status quo of the condescending privileged and the succour-seeking, alms-receiving needy (Payne, 2005). Christianity was also

viewed as being even more culpable and unwanted than other faiths, being cast as the dominant religion of the White, hegemonic, Imperial West (Parker et al., 2018). Greater tolerance and interest were shown towards other spiritual beliefs, while Christianity became a dirty word in the social work lexicon, alienating many covertly pious, diverse Christian social workers (Parker et al., 2018).

At the time there was little interest in or knowledge expressed about Islam in connection with the profession, apart from the occasional journal paper reporting on unfamiliar cultural practices in remote parts of the world (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999, 2007; Al-Shamsi & Fulcher, 2005; Hodge, 2005).

By the turn of the new millennium, however, much greater professional interest was beginning to be given towards the importance of spiritual worldviews for many service users (Furness & Gilligan, 2010; Warden et al., 2016). Gradually religion, faith and spirituality would be viewed as another essential domain of human existence that social workers should explore along with other personal characteristics and identities. Hunt (2014), in the meantime, made explicit the link between routine social work assessments of spirituality and professional adherence to social work values and principles.

The time was ripe to bring Islamic perspectives to the attention of the profession, as forming the experiences and expectations of so many service users of diverse ethnic heritage and background offenders (Ashencaen Crabtree & Baba, 2001). These numbers include White British converts. Notably Islam has become one of the dominant faiths among offenders (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016).

Reflecting on Islamic Concepts

To return to the rhetorical questions posed earlier, potentially Islamic perspectives can go further than merely being accepted by the profession, but more radically still, could help to transform social work itself. A counterpoint to this development could question the cultural or national applicability of this suggestion or whether this might serve to push other perspectives to the periphery. An additional warning is the danger of idealistically falling into the fallacy of believing that the unfamiliar must be superior to the known, that it is others who hold truths that are denied to us or that the balance of power conforms to a polarised hierarchy of superior or inferior positions (Razack, 2009). Instead, in weighing the relative merits of new approaches and ideas, a critical approach must remain to the fore. Nevertheless social work as a socially organic and responsive profession needs to be adaptive to societal and cultural changes, particularly when the views of Muslims are marginalised by sociocultural reasons, other than numerical or demographic significance (MCB, 2015).

Fortuitously, the social work professional imperialism that Midgley (1981) warned of is dissipating in influence as other nations develop indigenous or authenticised expertise (Ling, 2007). Thus no longer does social work pedagogy flow unidirectionally from the West to the East, the Global North to the South, but new knowledge is now also flowing back (Ashencaen Crabtree & Williams, 2012).

Those nations which formerly occupied the position of learner are now are leaders within their own right and willing to share their practice wisdom with us (Baba et al., 2011).

Revitalisation of professional social work is then both much needed and wanted. This is particularly so in the light of so-called 'new challenges' to use a well-worn cliché, by which is often meant newly perceived dangers and pitfalls or novel approaches to dealing with entrenched problems and difficulties.

Semantic subtleties apart, the rhetorical question remains: how can Islamic perspectives play their part in a renaissance of professional revitalisation? In terms of the incorporation of some of the values, perspectives and worldviews shared by so many Muslims across the world, we must retain clear recognition of the complexity of social work morphologies and the overarching aim to bridge, if possible, diverse nations and multiple archipelagos of practice, as promoted by the IFSW.

A useful beginning is therefore to reacquaint ourselves with some key Islamic concepts and principles, to review everyday practices relating to these; to both problematise and subject such concepts to a pedagogic process of reflection (Fook, 2007). The exercise might then be not only to transform social work practice by incorporating Islamic concepts, but equally, how these concepts can be rethought, reframed and re-offered in a dialectic that forms a transformative critical praxis.

The Concept of ʾUmma

ʾUmma refers to the community of Muslim believers in Islam. It acts as an articulation of transcultural faith in the context of a global religion, developed within a historical, geopolitical context where Islam was one new religion competing with many others (Waines, 2003). *ʾUmma* defines the identity and the conceptual and spiritual space for Muslims, the transglobal 'we' that in principle unites the Muslim world linking Turkey to Indonesia, the Sudan to Syria, and Yemenis to Malaysians.

ʾUmma separates the 'us' from the 'them', providing a sense of global identity with fellow Muslims and empathy for them. The so-called collateral damage of the two Gulf Wars reminded the Muslim world that imperialism still exists (Ashencaen Crabtree & Williams, 2012). Even more brutally, the terrible fate of traumatised Palestinians affects all Muslims globally through a sense of a unified *ʾumma*, in addition to any normal humanitarian sympathy for suffering. However, rhetoric should not obscure harsh realities whereby the holism of *ʾumma* has clearly and abjectly failed in terms of the appalling carnage inflicted on fellow Muslims by the Islamic State (ISIS, *Daesh*) (Cockburn, 2015) and the current war of attrition inflicted on the Yemen by Saudi Arabia.

Nonetheless, *ʾumma* is potent as well as poignant; however, in its sense of distinction, it also carries the inevitable risk of a reduced identity with fellow humans of other backgrounds and beliefs. The Christian New Testament story of the Good Samaritan who takes pains to help an injured individual from another religious

group and one moreover, that despises Samaritans, offers an example of why over-identification with one's own group acts as a weakness as well as a strength.

Social work also deals with these dichotomies of identity, of the 'us' and 'them' variety; and where the boundaries that separate social workers from others are often clearly demarcated. Here we may think in terms of the professional observation of territories and status: social work practitioners are often quick to mark out their professional turf, seen as explicitly differing from that of other professionals; and this is especially necessary in medical contexts, where a plethora of different professional groups can encroach or crowd out the unique social work remit. Strong distinctions can be made between the status of qualified and unqualified social workers even when similar work is undertaken. The quest to establish professional regulations in many countries is another means of drawing boundaries, stemming from situations where graduates from social work and diverse disciplines have been regarded as virtually on a par (Baba et al., 2011), or where social work has locally suffered from not publicly holding professional kudos (Parker et al., 2012). A significant separation is also observed between social work practitioners and social work academics, where the former are viewed as actually doing the job and the latter merely adding commentary.

The guarding of professional distinctions is likely to be of less significance to service users and clients seeking help and where the expertise and esoteric knowledge of the professional inevitably carries an aura of separation from the lived experiences and knowledge of the service user. The power differentials of professional social workers can be used both efficaciously or to reinforce control and manipulation. The recognition of the need to bridge the divide in the professional-laity dyad is acknowledged (Smith, 2008) and beyond the theorised there have been concerted attempts to overturn this in practice settings, particularly through movements like that of Radical Social Work. However, state control over social work services, its pronouncements and diktats, can too easily undermine professional trust in both the systems they operate in and the consumers of those systems – service users themselves – feeding into a perverse cycle of distrust and misunderstanding that distorts the so-called helping relationship (Parker & Ashencaen Crabtree, 2018).

Even if social workers sometimes feel beleaguered, isolated and stigmatised in their own particular context, tapping into collectivities of support which reinforce a sense of vocation and purpose is not merely inspiring, but essential for professional resilience. Thus an *ʾumma* could also relate to the globally dispersed, but universal body of social workers in all their diverse array and practices. This concept offers a potential framework by which the definitional universality of social work, as provided by the IFSW Global Definitions, can be realised by recognising that, apart from abstract adherence to a vision, social work is fundamentally embodied in the daily practices and agentic actions of individual social workers as a united mosaic of a social work *ʾumma.*

The Principle of zakāt

This differs from the other concepts discussed here in constituting one of the five sacred pillars of Islam that all Muslim believers must submit to. *Zakāt* refers to undertaking the obligatory taxation of believers in the form of alms (charity) to the poor and needy. *Zakāt* has been viewed as similar to other forms of charitable giving across the Abrahamic triumvirate of Judaism and Christianity. However, *zakāt* is subtly but crucially different. In the old English ballad of Lazarus and Devesus, often better known as a melody by the composer Vaughan Williams, the tale provides an unambiguous moral, Christian lesson on the importance of charity. In the ballad the rich and feasting Devesus is appealed to by the beggar Lazarus seeking some scraps of food. Instead, Devesus sends his men out to harass and whip Lazarus from his door – an action that is signified as indisputably cruel and wrong. To drive the moral home, the two men die the same night and Devesus is unsurprisingly consigned to hellfire and devilish torment, while Lazarus is received into heaven. The ballad lays out the uncompromising Christian argument that to save one's soul, one should sacrifice a few of one's worldly goods to help the needy.

The difference between *zakāt* and Christian charity is that the receiver of alms in the Islamic perspective purges the giver of the toxic corruption of their wealth and that wellbeing is thus something shared holistically and in kind throughout the community (Dean & Khan, 1997). The somewhat one-sided Christian notion of charity is turned on its head in this conceptualisation of *zakāt*, where it is conceivably a charitable act to *receive* wealth rather than just to *bestow* it.

A *zakāt*-focused view of social work repositions the community, not just individual service users, as central to social work concerns, where, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, the community has been squeezed out of the professional equation. This is of course a neo-liberal ideology and one famously encapsulated by the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher in 1987, whose doctrine was thus memorably stated: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." (Keay, 1987) Repudiating that view by re-centring the community as a living, organic entity by which one measures the social and cultural wellbeing of people, to employ Bourdieusian theorisation (Bourdieu, 1986), carries echoes of the socialist ethos of the former Radical Social Work movement of the 1970s (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009). By repositioning social work as an integral part of the living community, as being accessible, approachable and engaged, this locates social work as a community asset and more easily yields support where it is needed. It also serves to purge social services of some of its worst pretentions and mendacities in alluding to resource gatekeeping as equality of service and political neutrality as professional objectivity.

ʿIzza *(Honour)*

A highly controversial notion to include in any conceivable juxtaposition with that of social work is that of *ʿizza*; with this in mind and with all caveats and qualifications, I argue that there are some interesting analogies to be drawn, as will be explained further. *ʿIzza* refers to honour or respect but is a concept more likely to be interpreted through a cultural rather than a religious lens. *ʿIzza* is not a religious principle and Islam as a faith does not condone an *ʿizza*-type response. Moreover, attitudes and behaviour that resemble *ʿizza* extend beyond the Muslim world to other societies as well. Yet despite these qualifications, *ʿizza* does carry cultural legitimacy in many Muslim communities. It has been transported to non-Muslim societies under conditions of migration, where, in this regard, owing to the challenges of maintaining cultural identities and status in non-Muslim dominated societies, it may remain a tenacious and toxic element of social control of certain community members in migrant enclaves; where the rationalisation of religious and cultural values is often used to perpetuate its existence (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). Thus *ʿizza* is by no means an obsolete and obscure social manifestation, but is the present cause of the deaths of thousands of people every year (Irfan & Cowburn, 2004), as in, for example, the case of Banaz Mahmod (Füüse Films, 2013).

ʿIzza is embodied within the porous boundaries of the personal and public self (Goffman, 1990) in which 'honour' is extrinsically enacted rather than intrinsically experienced. *ʿIzza* is consequently agentic in being related to action within the social and familiar sphere and is initiated or enacted where there is conflict arising from questionable public reputation. In this sense, it is somewhat like the old culture-bound phenomenon of *amok,* known in historical Southeast Asia, where a situation of self-perceived mortification becomes overwhelming to the degree that within that culture psychological pain is released in an explosion of gratuitous violence by the individual (Spores, 1988; Ashencaen Crabtree, 2012). *Amok*, which inspired the English phrase 'to run amok' (denoting uncontrolled fury, chaos and confusion), is no longer a noticeable phenomenon, beyond the notoriously common tragedies of murderous shooting sprees of innocent bystanders in the US.

ʿIzza is primarily enacted by the powerful upon the powerless and marginalised in the immediate community, typically those embodying patriarchy, exerting absolute control over female relatives (daughters, sisters, nieces, wives etc.), or those perceived to be in some way deviant, such as relatives who fail to conform to heteronormative standards of behaviour (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Notoriously, therefore, it has often been blamed as the motivation behind serious domestic violence, predominantly towards female relatives, and is commonly described as 'honour-based violence' where it is believed that the public stain of dishonour is thus wiped out in the eyes of others (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016). It should be pointed that the term almost seems to excuse the cruelty and gravity of the crime in its implications of moral righteousness, and thus preferable nomenclatures include 'shame killings' or simply and starkly 'femicide' (Dias & Proudman, 2014).

Social work would, in theory, completely reject the rationale and enactment of *ʿizza,* and its value base would seem to lie at a polar extreme to such violent manifestations of toxicity. Yet in some senses, an *ʿizza*-type response is not unknown in the profession. Social work codes of practice, like *ʿizza*, act as public declarations of professional conformity and adherence that are punishable, if transgressed by individual social workers. Violence within the profession may not be physical, but it does involve retribution in the form of reputational discrediting, jeopardised job security, livelihood precarity, loss of status and likely expulsion from the profession. It accordingly offers violence in the form of moral opprobrium, public disgrace and professional rejection.

However, professional *ʿizza* can also be enacted through media exposure of the serious abuse or death of some unfortunate individual in receipt of social work care. Irrespective that their harm came at the hands of those normally outside of the profession, it is often the profession that is held to account, such as in the atrocious case of the abused and murdered infant, 'Baby P' (Jones, 2014). In the UK, such exposés are likely to result in individual practitioners being publicly named and tried by the media. As Foucault (1977) might note in his analysis of discipline and punishment, the scapegoat social worker will be punished and vilified through this ritualised enactment of social condemnation, which serves to exonerate the corporate body, who can thereby wash its hands of the crime, through the sacrificial cleaning of the stain and thus a restoration of honour.

The risk of such a fate inevitably acts as an effective deterrent against social workers moving into high risk areas of practice, specifically Child Protection, where there is a significant staff shortage in the UK (Pile, 2009). A destructive, punitive *ʿizza*-type response therefore needs to be challenged by regulatory bodies in order to protect practitioners from automatic blame and responsibility, not only as a matter of rational fairness but in order to protect the integrity of social work practice. Mistakes are undoubtedly made by social workers and terrible things do happen, regardless of good social work intervention or exceptionally rarely at the hands of actual social workers, whose stigmatised, scapegoat role (Burke & Parker, 2007) becomes the lightning rod for a public display of social revulsion and repudiation.

Al-insān al-kāmil *(The Complete Human)*

This concept moves us away from the dramaturgical, as Goffman (1990) would frame *ʿizza*, in being a donned, externalised display, in this case of aggressive subservience to social norms. Instead, we are returned to the inner domain of the individual conscience. *Al-insān al-kāmil* in Arabic refers to perfection or excellence and relates to individual agency in demonstrating inner faith through enacted deeds. Viewed additionally as the promotion of human dignity, it is integrally tied to a spiritual quest in keeping with the holism of Islam.

Despite contention and localised variations in custom, the accepted principles and rituals act as a guide for individuals to follow the 'straight' path. This is one that

promotes aspiration to the ideal and complete human, *al-insān al-kāmil*, and, in conformity with the other monotheistic religions, seeks to lead believers to eternal life (Ashencaen Crabtree et al., 2016, 30–41).

The concept in its wider sense is one that that most social work practitioners would find immediately recognisable in its exhortations towards acknowledgement of self as a moral agent in the world with a duty and (hopefully) a commitment towards social responsibility. It fits well with social work principles linked to professional codes, which are in turn ideally internalised by the individual as not only being aspects intrinsic to the social work identity but implicitly personal as well. At its least, *al-insān al-kāmil* provides moral guidance, which resonates with social work (and those of allied professions) by harnessing the almost visceral, emotional motivation of practitioners to help others.

Al-insān al-kāmil reminds us that we are engaged in a private pilgrimage towards, if not *the* good, goodness as a locus of identity (this for the profession can equally be viewed in religious, spiritual or humanitarian, secular terms). The principle can inspire and propel each practitioner to strive towards the best in the profession by connecting them to an authentic and courageous mission to root out that which is disruptive, dysfunctional, harmful and plain wrong, in order to seek out that which is its virtuous, diametrical, binary opposite. Heterogeneity and diversity are recognised, but the fundamental principles towards authentic goodness and the need for moral courage are in keeping with the notion of the human condition as moral in a spiritual or humanitarian sense. Thus articulated and internalised, it could be used to rearm practitioners in their commitment to the social work mission of service to humanity (Beckett & Maynard, 2005), as a compelling call to uphold as the first professional priority: justice and equality.

Concluding Remarks

I do not promote or endorse any assertion that social work should, as a matter of principle, uncritically absorb wider sociocultural or religious beliefs and values. Nonetheless, social work fallibilities towards ethnocentricism and often an over-dependent and unequal reliance on governments to define our unique territory does periodically require us to step back, rethink and re-imagine social work. Evidently, there are other ethical and moral perspectives in the world that may be unfamiliar but are closely congruent with the spirit of social work values and its mission. Thoughtful deconstruction of the essential meaning of these perspectives can and should be undertaken with a view to possible judicious employment of them where it appropriately enriches both social work theorisation and practice.

As we know, the IFSW definition recognises and promotes diversity of thought and practice, including that of indigenous perspectives. Religio-cultural beliefs and principles can also make a very important contribution to the evolution of a progressive, united, global profession; one which, moreover, may not logically stand as separate from indigenous worldviews in many cultures. However, as in the case of

the Islamic principles examined here, this is not just a unidirectional contribution, but is multi-directional. In the process of critical reflection by viewing these introduced concepts through a social work lens, a revitalising potential may be revealed that illuminates an adaptive power and strength offering wider benefits. This untapped potential goes beyond the boundaries of faith communities or cultural interpretations, reaching to us through a deeper professional nuanced inclusivity, feeding into the strength and richness of the moral, intellectual and practical purpose that defines all that is best about this remarkable social work heritage.

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Quo Vadis, Islamic Social Work? Empirical Findings and Theoretical Reflections Converging towards an Alternative Approach

Hansjörg Schmid and Amir Sheikhzadegan

Abstract This final chapter attempts to associate, structure and summarise the principal insights of the contributions to "Exploring Islamic Social Work. Between Community and the Common Good". Despite differences in their topics and the contexts they treat, the methods applied and angles adopted, all the chapters have a common focus on Muslims as protagonists, both in the field of Islamic social work, and the Islamic thinking around it. The volume's topic itself is embedded in a new social work scholarly debate, stimulated by the re-emergence of social work's religious roots in the context of post-secular society. This chapter reviews Islamic social work as an empirical phenomenon, discusses various theological and ethical approaches, again takes up the debate on the common good and examines Islamic social work as alternative social work. Finally, the question of what exactly Islamic social work consists of and the challenges which arise in connection with the 'Islamic' attribution are addressed. In this way, both insights and open questions, as well as directions for further research on Islamic social work, are identified within the framework of different research discourses.

Keywords Islamic social work · Islamic ethics · Islamic theology · Alternative social work · Common good · Muslim communities

The volume "Exploring Islamic Social Work. Between Community and the Common Good" is an attempt to explore a wide range of social work practices, reflection and programming across different Western contexts. What links the various contributions is their focus on Muslims, as protagonists in this field, on the one hand, and relevant Islamic thought, on the other. The topic is embedded in a new general

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debate in social work, as the religious roots of the latter come to the fore again, albeit in a different way and form: social work is now faced with the challenge of situating itself at the interface of the secular and religious-spiritual spheres, which are often less divided than it may appear.

This final chapter takes on the task of structuring, discussing and evaluating the results of the various preceding chapters. The focus is on cross-connections and correlations between the contributions, on discussing them critically and on thinking further about the issues they pursue. In accordance with the different parts of the volume and the different approaches to Islamic social work, the present contribution does not do this in a uniform way, but chooses a path appropriate to each approach and each issue in question. Typologies play an important role here, i. e. that of assigning service-providing FBOs, country contexts and theological-ethical positions to different types in order to reach a more general level of discussion. Another aim of the chapter is to bring contributions with similar approaches into dialogue, while relating different groups of contributions to each other in varying fashions. The aim is to show how empirical and theoretical approaches from different disciplines can be productively combined. Finally, enquiries and critical discussions of the contributions serve to point out where further research is needed.

This chapter will first look at Islamic social work as an empirical phenomenon relating both to the empirical contributions in part I of the volume and to contextual aspects in further contributions. This is followed by a discussion of various theological and ethical approaches with a focus on part II. Then Islamic social work and the common good in Western, plural and secularised contexts as a transversal question in both empirical and theoretical chapters will be scrutinised, before Islamic social work as alternative social work is discussed, mainly in relation to part III of the volume. Finally, the overarching question of exactly what Islamic social work consists of and what challenges arise in connection with the 'Islamic' attribution of the term will be addressed.

In this way, five central aspects of Islamic social work are addressed in the present chapter: its multifaceted, practical implementation by different actors, for different target groups and in different contexts; its theological-ethical foundation as embedded in traditional Islamic discourses, as well as in relation to current interdisciplinary reflections; its concrete and programmatic reference to the universal common good and the openness of the latter to religious-cultural particularities; its location in the professional and disciplinary framework of a social work critical of its own norms and open to new approaches; finally, its self-reflexive questioning of the Islamic profile with regard to its proprium on the one hand and its ability to integrate into the framework of broader social work on the other. This indicates various cornerstones for the directions in which Islamic social work can develop further. However, it also becomes clear that in a relational sense the issue is also the profile of plural societies and their respective approaches to social work.

Islamic Social Work as an Empirical Phenomenon

The various contributions, especially in the first part of this volume, help to define the subject of Islamic social work more precisely. Some major characteristics and challenges of Islamic social work are discussed here:

In most cases, Islamic social work has its origins in "self-help" (Schmid, 2022, 100) or "intracultural social work" (Brodard, 2022, 36) addressing the specific needs of Muslims – be it youth, women, families or detainees. Islamic social work thus responds to a demand for a sensitive offer in which providers and beneficiaries are both of a similar cultural and religious background (Schröer & Ürek, 2022, 226). While some contributions refer to clearly professional social work recognised by the state (Schröer & Ürek, 2022), others include informal non-professional social work in mosques, associations and other types of communities (Brodard, 2022; Irfan, 2022). Brodard speaks of "informal 'social workers'" (2022, 29) who assume a social work function without having a corresponding mandate or the required qualifications. Hussain also wants to understand social work in a wider sense as "social action and activity in the engagement of social and charitable good in society" (2022, 121–122). These activities are in many cases linked with religious communities. Thus, Irfan shows that Muslim communities function as a "moral community" (2022, 55) and as such can provide both tangible and intangible support for their members. By engendering respect for law and strengthening a positive new identity, they also encourage them to positively contribute to broader society (Irfan, 2022, 57–58) instead of seeing themselves as its victims (Irfan, 2022, 62). In this sense, communities and their informal social work and care (Whittaker 1986) indirectly promote the common good of society. Faith, spirituality and religious practice may also provide specific "faithful" or "religious capital" (Hussain, 2022, 123), complementing and strengthening the bonding and bridging social capital of religious communities.

However, this focus on community-based work poses several challenges: is there not a risk that the profile and quality standards of social work become weakened? Should there not be a greater distinction between the functions of religious communities on the one hand and professional social work on the other (Crisp, 2017, 376), even if in some cases social work can be provided by community members or within communities? How can such informal social work be linked with other formal services and incorporated into official systems? And how can it be guaranteed that communities truly respect individual choice and do not impose their norms on their members? This certainly requires an adherence to the principles of social work as defined by the International Federation of Social Workers: "The overarching principles of social work are respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, doing no harm, respect for diversity and upholding human rights and social justice" (IFSW, 2014). In order to derive guidelines for practice, these principles require some further elaboration. To name but one example, Afrouz and Crisp (2022, 213–214) draw on Mapp et al. (2019), to underscore that respect for human dignity means respecting the individual's self-determination. This does not mean,

however, that the relational dimensions and the embeddedness of human existence highlighted by Sahin (2022, 184) can be ignored; nor can the fact that by being anchored in a community, human beings are never completely self-determined (Akbar, 2019). Islamic concepts and normative guidelines relevant to social work have both an individual and a collective dimension (Abdullah, 2022, 234). Regarding the latter, in an organisation for instance, space for self-determination would necessitate transparent differentiation between social and religious services in the sense of a "dual-focus" model (Unruh & Sider, 2005, 137), so that service-users are free to refrain from participating in religious offers.

A reference to the debate on Faith-Based-Organisations (FBOs) already mentioned in the introduction (Schmid & Sheikhzadegan, 2022, 9–11) may be helpful at this point: several contributions roughly represent some of the types in Unruh and Sider's typology of FBOs, although this attempt to classify complex individual cases also illustrates the fact that every typology is "inherently limited" (Unruh & Sider, 2005, 109). The Muslim welfare provider as described by Schröer and Ürek can be best classified as a faith-affiliated FBO which goes beyond the boundaries of a religious community. Irfan's case refers to mosques and the impact their services have on offenders; it can thus be seen as a faith-permeated organisation. The concept of *tawba* as discussed by Abdullah refers to the act of repentance which would in many cases require a religious authority's ruling. Therefore, the concept of *tawba* could be best applied in the context of either a faith-permeated or a faith-centred FBO. Referring to different cases, Brodard observes an "overlapping between religious services and social work" (2022, 38): the case of SASI in Geneva originating from a mosque and using its premises can best be characterised as a faith-centred FBO, *Secours Islamique France* (SIF), *Tasamouh* and Kumon Y'all as faith-affiliated FBOs. In the latter organisations, religiously motivated key protagonists stand in the foreground, with other staff and volunteers from outside the religious community playing minor roles, if any. It is noticeable that in this classification the category of faith-background FBOs is not represented. This may be related to the fact that currently, working with Muslim service users goes along with a strong emphasis on their identity profile, while over time some of the organisations may undergo an opening process, as has been the case with various Christian charities (Koehrsen & Heuser, 2020).

Different types of FBOs and the (non-professional) social work they provide are perceived differently in different countries. In each country, both the structure of its welfare state and its religious policy play a central role when it comes to a recognition of Muslim welfare as "a supplement and enrichment to already existing welfare systems" (Badawia, 2022, 163). While Western contexts share, in this regard, many experiences and challenges (Verba & Guélamine, 2022, 71), the specific impact of secularism on how FBOs are treated differs from one country to the other. The contributions in this volume refer to different national contexts. Sometimes, they provide a broader framework for reflection in a specific context, such as Canada (Isgandarova, 2022) or Australia (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022). In the first part, three

contributions take a more specific look at the country context they treat (France, Germany and Great Britain). In the French context, the secularisation of the profession of social work has been particularly marked. Consequently, they are easily destabilised through the affirmation of religion (Verba & Guélamine, 2022, 68). The case of Muslim-heritage children in the British context illustrates how important social workers' religious sensitivity is (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2022). The German context, with a strong cooperative orientation in its welfare systems shows the possibility of state support which encourages and promotes Islamic social work and contributes to its integration (Schmid, 2022). Across these three cases, we see a high degree of variation which provides insights for a broader discussion. The separation and delegation of religion into the private sphere in France, the scope for the development of culture- and religion-based welfare services in the multicultural United Kingdom and the recognition of religious service providers as structured and controlled by the state in the German cooperation model represent three very different constellations for Islamic social work. Although it would be exciting and useful to include country contexts outside the Western world in the comparison (for an example, see Akimoto et al., 2016), these three context studies already present a considerable spectrum of possibilities for shaping Islamic social work within the framework of the welfare state.

In view of the growing criticism of country typologies in welfare research (Van Kersbergen, 2019), we stop short of labelling the country cases as 'types'. Likewise, authors who develop complex typologies of religious policy admit that there is a "significant variation" (Fox, 2018, 129) within the different categories. Moreover, each national context approach also has its limitations, stemming from internal diversity and a divide between theory and practice: Verba and Guélamine, for instance, show that different interpretations of secularism exist within France, even varying from one institution to another (2022, 75–76). Moreover, they have observed that social workers in France very often break away from the rigid secularism of their profession to practice "a form of reasonable compromise, based on the Canadian accommodations model" (Verba & Guélamine, 2022, 70). For instance, they might find out that wearing the veil "does not systematically correlate with gendered submission" (Verba & Guélamine, 2022, 74), but can also be interpreted as "a form of identity renewal, an emancipation from family and school, as a sign of generational belonging, for the sake of fashion, if on the matrimonial market and, of course, for social control" (Verba & Guélamine, 2022, 75). Similarly, in the UK and Germany, political and social debates about the shape of the welfare system are ongoing, with social work being as internally pluralistic as in France. It therefore seems obvious to consider country-specific contexts as only one factor among others and to conceptualise them in a more dynamic way when analysing cases and discussing Islamic social work. Moreover, the agency of the respective bodies and protagonists, as well as the underlying Islamic ideas and theological reflections also need to be adequately taken into account.

Providing Theological and Ethical Legitimation for Islamic Social Work

The practical examples of Islamic social work show that it arose from necessity in the field. However, theological reflection is also necessary when it comes to the religious legitimation of Islamic social work practice, as well as establishing a connection to social work as an academic discipline. For the time being, a contextualisation of Islamic social work "within Muslim tradition" (Sahin, 2022, 181) is still missing: five contributions in the second part of the volume address this challenge. These chapters have different methodological and content-related approaches and can be classified into five types of positions, with some tensions between each other, but which are still essentially complementary. The difference between textual and contextual approaches will be highlighted as one distinguishing element (Saeed, 2005, 3). Some contributions refer to the same concepts, such as *maqāṣid* (objectives of the Shariʿa) and *maṣlaḥa* (common good), but interpret and weigh them in different ways. All five contributions share the position that one should go beyond a narrow community-oriented framework to take the broader societal context into consideration.

Hussain undertakes a synthetic and contextual approach to Islamic social work, combining different schools and disciplines of Islamic thought and theology with contemporary social sciences. He refers to different positions of the teleological *maqāṣid*-approach, illustrating a spectrum of reformist and conservative interpretations. This approach can be understood as "a way for changes in the modern era to speak to their [the Muslims', the authors] lived experience of Islam" (Hussain, 2022, 125). It is complemented by contemporary reformist approaches based on a holistic reading of the Qurʾan, often linked to contemporary political issues, and again brought into dialogue with Abraham Maslow's conception of human needs. Such a dialogical setting is seen by Hussain as "an important opportunity for learning about new ways of understanding Islam" (2022, 135) in a pluralist Western context. He thereby emphasises the role of human reason and considers "ambiguity and subjectivity" (Hussain, 2022, 130) in interpretation as strengths to be rediscovered. Yet is there not a risk of constructing an anachronistic continuity when looking at the "origins of Islam" (Hussain, 2022, 131) and examples in the Prophet's life (Hussain, 2022, 128)? How can a broad spectrum of cited positions be combined with each other? And is Maslow's anthropocentric approach not also problematic in relation to "divine principles" (Hussain, 2022, 130), even if these are interpreted in a humanistic way?

Kurnaz proposes a theological legitimation of a contemporary approach to Islamic social work. He wants to avoid text-centredness as well as binary classification into 'allowed' and 'forbidden'. Adopting an anthropological point of view, he bases his discussion on general human capabilities such as knowledge, reason and the capacity to find solutions, arguing that "different solutions to the same problem can co-exist" (Kurnaz, 2022, 143). By focussing on human needs as basis for social work, he argues against a compartmentalisation of religious affiliations. Referring

to Maslow, Kurnaz links human needs to the Qurʾanic concept of *al-maʿrūf,* which he considers as inclusive, flexible and open to diversity. He therefore speaks of the "open texture" (2022, 146) of the Qurʾan and its "room for ambiguity" (Kurnaz, 2022, 149). His approach is also teleological, in a sense of striving to achieve the most benefit for society. Kurnaz clearly practices a public theology approach (Schmid & Sheikhzadegan, 2022, 8) when linking secular and religious argumentation and formulating, as a double criterion, "adequacy to human experience, but also to Muslim tradition and principle" (Kurnaz, 2022, 148). He provides theological tools to legitimate Islamic social work while leaving space for contemporary concepts. He shows that social work can only be theologically legitimated and not substantiated. But can the contingent historico-critical approach he applies really provide a basis and starting point for reflection? Is there not a risk it will be yet another textual approach which proves the openness of the text?

Badawia's attempt to provide a fundament for Islamic social work can be characterised as a reinterpretative-textual approach. Unlike the other contributions, he includes both a textual and historical approach, looking at Islamic scholarship and models in history. The prophet himself functions as a "role-model" (Badawia, 2022, 168). He attempts to transfer guiding principles and concepts such as *zakāt* or *waqf* to a contemporary context. For Badawia, exegesis of the sources represents a tool for building up Islamic social work in the context of the modern welfare state. He attempts a reinterpretation by referring to "parallels between the historical context and the current context of establishing Muslim welfare care in modern societies" (Badawia, 2022, 159). One of his key approaches is interpreting the categories of recipients in Q 9:60, in order to update the notion of *zakāt* in relation to current contexts. A historical and textual approach is certainly necessary for a reflection on Islamic social work, especially if, as is the case with his approach, it is done in a hermeneutically reflected way. If one also examines the case studies presented in this volume, some of which see religious services and social work as very closely interlinked, referring to traditional concepts and normative texts undoubtedly proves to be important. But are the results of this reinterpretation really applicable to the requirements of the modern welfare state? Considering *zakāt* as a "vehicle for defining and asserting Muslim identity" (Kuran, 2019, 26), especially in the twentieth century, can a Qurʾanic approach deliver concrete and appropriate concepts for contemporary Western contexts?

Isgandarova addresses the interface of Islamic traditions and social work, with a focus on the individual. Like Kurnaz, she is critical of a too-normative approach: she emphasises the "epistemic weight" of human experience, aiming at a "shift from primarily text-based teaching into studies of the praxis of faith" (Isgandarova, 2022, 169). She relates a key concept of hers, the "living human document", to Islamic concepts like *tawḥīd* (oneness and unity of God) or *taqwā* (God-consciousness) (Isgandarova, 2022, 172). From this vantage point, she postulates a correlation between a client-centred approach in counselling and human-centred revelation, corresponding again to public theology. Whereas Kurnaz demonstrates an openness to such an approach from a theological perspective, Isgandarova instead

develops it further at an interdisciplinary interface, which is indispensable for a reflection on Islamic social work. But can a "living human document" be based on the same level as Scripture from a theological point of view (2022, 172)? Isgandarova also illustrates how a dialogue with Christian approaches can be helpful. Nonetheless, widespread pressure on Muslims in public discourse to adapt to Christian models is to be avoided (2022). How can Muslim and Christian approaches be brought into a fruitful dialogue on an equal footing? Are there ways to further integrate impulses from Christian authors into an Islamic frame of thought?

Sahin examines the interface of Islamic traditions and social work, with a focus on its social dimensions. He argues that the famous 'Medinah Pledge', which came into existence under the leadership of the prophet Muhammad (Sahin, 2022, 192), was based on the principles and values of inclusive, applied relational social ethics, delivering guidelines for Muslims' engagement with non-Muslims with the aim of serving the common good. He also reflects on the convergence of Shariʿa and relational ethics, while criticising a literalist reading of the Qurʾan and legal tradition in Islam. Referring to philosophers like Levinas, he emphasises the relational aspect in ethics and theology. By adopting a social-ethical perspective and referring to both theological traditions and contemporary philosophy, Sahin provides a theoretical foundation to bridge these two domains without falling into the trap of either Western hegemony or complete relativism. Still, the problematic of dealing with the Shariʿa as a highly burdened concept and the term minority, which is central to it, being understood as an expression of Muslim separation from broader society, remains. How can the focus on Shariʿa be linked to approaches from other theological disciplines also mentioned by Sahin, such as Qurʾanic interpretation or mysticism?

The five approaches discussed above illustrate the rich resources they draw upon. They all refer to Islamic terms and concepts, giving different weight to a text-centred approach. To varying degrees, they enter into a dialogue with contemporary philosophical, psychological and sociological positions, fundamentally emphasising a convergence with the Muslim framework of thought. However, the open questions posed in each case also show that this discussion needs to be continued. Sometimes the complex theological and ethical debate is only very selectively and one-sidedly perceived at grassroots level (Hussain, 2022, 128). There is still a need for dialogue between these different levels so that they can be brought together in the most productive way.

Beyond these five approaches, further directions could be considered. For example, liberation theological approaches, with their strong structural orientation, can offer helpful starting points for social work (Schmid, 2022, 112). Finally, the five contributions mentioned above, refer, in varying degrees, to social work and corresponding social scientific concepts. While practitioners are often relatively unfamiliar with theological and ethical backgrounds, not all thinkers represented here are equally acquainted with the practical field and the theoretical foundation of social work. This partly shows the limitations of the respective perspectives: an even more interdisciplinary approach drawing on theology, ethics, social work and social sciences is desirable in the future.

Islamic Social Work and the Common Good in Western Contexts

The question of the common good is situated at the interface of the two preceding sections on empirical and theological perspectives. Already an issue of interest in Greek philosophy and throughout Western intellectual history ever since, the concept has also been a major topic in contemporary political philosophy, for instance in the so-called "liberal-communitarian debate" of the 1980s. Scholars have debated questions such as who defines the common good (Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2019), or "what the common good entails, how it should be balanced against individual goods, and if and by whom it should be enforced" (Etzioni, 2015, 1). One core issue in the debate is whether individual rights should take primacy over the common good or the other way around. While the advocates of individual rights are generally sceptical of the concept of the common good, with some even going so far as to regard the common good as a threat to individual and minority rights, others have argued that neglecting the common good would ultimately destroy the very social fabric that enables a fostering of individual freedom in the first place (see, for example, Etzioni, 2015; Glendon, 1991). Considering the plurality of positions on and approaches to the common good, it is crucial not to essentialise this concept and to always place it in an historical and geographical context, while taking into account diverse points of view (Schmid & Sheikhzadegan, 2022, 8–9). Whereas some chapters of this volume consider the question of the common good from a theoretical theological perspective, others have an empirical focus. The question of whether Islamic social work should be limited to Muslim service users or also target clients beyond Muslim communities are highlighted across three chapters, each with a different focus and approach.

Brodard applies an empirical method regarding the question as to why many Islamic organisations focus on Muslim service users while claiming to serve the common good. He observes that as Islamic canonical sources can be interpreted both in favour of prioritising Muslim beneficiaries and serving the common good in a wider context, depending on their ideological stance, Muslim organisations either adopt a particularistic or universalistic approach to social work (2022, 38). Likewise, Hussain argues that the different approaches to the study of *maṣalih* (plural of *maṣlaḥa*, common good) show considerable potential, but that the richness of this discourse is often lost when translated into the grassroots welfare and charitable organisations of Muslim communities (2022, 130). The result is often a rather simplified and conservative public discourse which focuses on fulfilling the five essential objectives of Shariʿa (preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage and property) (Hussain, 2022, 126). Thus, an ambiguous discursive tradition forms the starting point for contemporary positioning.

Hussain draws on the Islamic concept of *maṣlaḥa ʿamma* (common good) to show how one could use Islamic legal thought to derive guidelines for social work that would go beyond Muslim communities to also address more general objectives, such as human development in the wider context of a Western nation. He concludes

that although *maqāṣid-cum-maṣalih* has time and again enabled the scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of law) to propose reforms that would help Muslims to root their practices more contextually, it nevertheless has limitations and cannot therefore always deliver solutions for the contemporary 'Muslim condition' in Western contexts (2022, 134–135). Favouring an approach based on human needs according to Maslow, Hussain shows a rather individual focus in his concept of the common good.

Sahin proposes the concept of "relational ethics" to show the Shariʿa's potential for enabling Muslims to actively promote the common good in Western contexts. Arguing that Habermas' model of universal communication on an equal footing fails to include "minority voices" (2022, 183), he follows a virtue ethics approach, based on Aristotle and MacIntyre, which provides a space in which Islamic ideas of a good life can be explored. Criticising the 'reified' approach to Shariʿa, as adopted by certain groups of Muslims, he emphasises the role of Muslim faith leaders in engaging with the wider society. Arguing from a rather communitarian stance, he maintains that such an engagement should go beyond "mere conversations", to facilitate convergence "in addressing inequalities, renewing public trust and working towards peaceful coexistence" (Sahin, 2022, 196). In so doing, Muslims would help to cultivate "values of shared relational ethics" with the aim of forming "an inclusive conception of the common good" (Sahin, 2022, 197). In this way, Sahin shows how a distinctly Muslim profile in the field of social work and in other sectors of activity can be compatible with an approach oriented towards the common good.

Brodard shows that there are further practical factors which are relevant beyond theological reflections: firstly, the focus on Muslims often resulted from the overrepresentation of Muslims among excluded social groups such as illegal migrants, the homeless, prisoners or urban youth living in distressed neighbourhoods (2022, 38–39). Furthermore, prioritising Muslim beneficiaries may be based on strategic considerations, simply because an 'intracultural' approach to social work can lead to better funding opportunities and facilitate the cooperation of Muslim organisations with statutory social work bodies (Brodard, 2022, 40). This illustrates that the way Muslim organisations and faith leaders approach the common good also depends on the wider society's expectations of them (Schmid & Brodard, 2020).

A paradoxical discourse situation is revealed here: on the one hand, Muslims are expected to actively demonstrate their contribution to the common good. On the other, under the umbrella of security and prevention policy, they are supported in setting up specific services for at-risk Muslim target groups (Hernández Aguilar, 2018, 95, 158). Sahin's call for Muslims to converge towards, rather than merely converse with, wider society as well as his pleading for an "inclusive public space" (2022, 196) is an indication that it cannot only be about steps towards participation of Muslims, but also the further development of an inclusive discursive framework.

To summarise, the sources of Islam as well as the manifold history of scholarly work on Islamic ethics can be drawn upon to determine guidelines which combine community service with activities that serve the common good in wider society. Real-life conditions, however, may hamper the ability of Muslim communities to

fully exploit this potential. Against this background, the following sets of questions can be identified for further research:

- *Criteria for the common good*: According to what criteria can intra-community activities be understood as a contribution to the common good, perhaps by promoting a respect for the law, boosting positive self-identity (Irfan, 2022, 61) or providing bridging social capital (Hussain, 2022, 122)? How can liberal and communitarian positions on the common good be reconciled?
- *Theological reflection*: How can the concept of the common good be problematised more clearly at the interface of individual needs, community experiences and social framework? How can further sources, for example from Shiʿi traditions, be better integrated into a debate largely focused on Sunni perspectives?
- *Transfer to wider debates*: How can these theological reflections, of which the empirical contributions to this volume show relatively few traces, be implemented in contemporary Western contexts? How can Muslim scholars contribute to wider academic, as well as political, debates?
- *Discursive framework*: How can a debate on welfare and the common good be conducted so that minorities can participate? How can the common good be made even more plural by integrating positions which include different worldviews and religions?

These questions are only partly Islam-specific, as they also concern social work in a broader sense. Nevertheless, they clearly show that many issues regarding Islam and the common good are yet to be dealt with and new approaches are to be sought, before Islamic social work can efficiently promote the contribution of Muslims to the wellbeing of all.

Islamic Social Work as Alternative Social Work

In the face of migration, pluralisation and globalisation, Islam raises anew the question of how social work should be conceptualised in regard to these changes. Given the limitations of mainstream social work, an alternative approach is required to address this challenge. The contributions in Part III can especially be seen as expressions of alternative, post-secular, dynamic and contextual social work that highlight the religious dimensions of working with Muslim service users. The authors approach the encounter between social work and Islamic concepts in different ways: Abdullah speaks of an intersection and argues that practices and values of service users need to be assessed (2022, 239–240). According to Ashencaen Crabtree, one has "to step back, rethink and re-imagine social work" (2022, 261).

The authors also have different visions of this encounter: whereas Ashencaen Crabtree (2022) focuses on transformation of social work in general, Abdullah (2022) and other contributors look predominantly at Muslim service users. Ashencaen Crabtree also underscores the necessity of dialogue between mainstream and Islamic social work, by referring to Islamic concepts as well as cultural

practices and traditions. For instance, she draws on the concept *umma* (community) to look at boundary-making on different levels. She also uses the South Asian Muslims' tradition of *'izza* (honour) to critically address a pressure to conform which she believes she observes in social work (2022, 259–260). Western social work is thus supposed to critically examine itself in the mirror of Muslim discourses. This also shows the potential of Islamic social work to participate in broader debates, far beyond the sphere of Muslim protagonists. However, both a focus on Muslim service users (Abdullah, 2022; Afrouz & Crisp, 2022; Schröer & Ürek, 2022) and a call for the transformation of mainstream social work in the mirror of Islam/Muslims (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022) have their limitations: using *tawba* in a social work intervention, as outlined by Abdullah, presupposes far-reaching theological skills which social workers usually do not possess. Therefore, cooperation with imams and religious institutions will probably be necessary. Furthermore, she considers *tawba* in a wider sense, as a "principle of change" (2022, 240) which may entail the risk of altering its profile and semantic potential. As for *Ashencaen Crabtree*'s contribution, the following questions could be raised: is there not a risk of essentialising Islamic concepts by trying to incorporate them in Western social work? And how can they be made fruitful for people who are not Muslims and for whom these concepts and traditions do not have any normative impact?

Despite these open questions, the approaches of the two authors, and of the other contributors to Part III, can be understood as possible aspects of an alternative social work, the guidelines of which can be summarised as follows:

- *Etemic approach*: When this volume brings together theological and social-science approaches, the intention is not to restrict oneself to either a neutral outsider or a partisan insider perspective, but to consider their overlap, as well as their potential for mutual enrichment. It is in this spirit that Ashencaen Crabtree (2022, 250) has proposed to fuse emic and etic to "etemic". This would also mean avoiding drawing disciplinary boundaries too narrowly and providing space for a variety of different perspectives in social work. On a practical level, social workers would be seen in the role of "translating faith practices and beliefs" (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2022, 93) and mediating between different perspectives.
- *Self-critique*: Becoming open to different and alternative approaches also requires a critique of "social work ontologies" (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022, 250) and of "failings in the profession" (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022, 251). This would include a deconstruction of "misperceptions as to what it means to be Muslim" (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022, 214). Instead of claiming a universally valid paradigm of social work, it is important to question one's own standpoint and thus be open to dialogue with alternative approaches. However, any self-criticism should not be limited to mainstream approaches, but extend to Islamic social work and various forms of indigenous social work. The need to first assert oneself and find recognition does not provide exemption from the requirement to also deal with other approaches when self-reflecting.

- *Critical integration and transformation*: It is essential to discuss Islamic concepts critically when integrating them into the broader framework of social work. After all, "religious beliefs of many persuasions have at times been used to oppress individuals and communities" (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022, 214). Therefore, instead of a "wholesale adoption" (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022, 250), a reflective inclusivity is required. The purpose here should not be mere acceptance of Islamic contributions, but rather letting social work itself be transformed (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022, 255–256). This requires a willingness to learn and a dynamic understanding of the profession.
- *Tolerance of ambiguity*: A hermeneutical approach to the canonical sources of Islam inevitably results in ambiguity (Hussain, 2022, 130; Kurnaz, 2022, 148–149) when it comes to working out guidelines for Islamic social work in Western contexts. Cultural and religious references should therefore not be essentialised but considered in a multi-voiced discussion. As Brodard (2022) has shown, such ambiguity is even felt in the field when Muslim communities deal with the question of whether to prioritise Muslims in their care services.
- *Conflict capacity*: Interaction between social work and religion may also be conflictual, especially as there are sometimes tensions between a human rights approach to social work (Crisp, 2017, 376; Staub-Bernasconi, 2016) and cultural sensitivity (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022) or the "rigid requirements" (Abdullah, 2022, 240) of organised religion. There are also occasionally conflictual interactions between Muslim social workers and 'mainstream' social workers (Verba & Guélamine, 2022, 72–73), as well as between individuals and their communities (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022, 220–221). A further dimension of conflict may occur between social work ideals and the state framework. Finally, Islamic social work may also have to deal with conflicts between local practices, such as shame killings or *ʿizza* (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022, 259), and a humanistic interpretation of Islam by Muslim scholars.
- *Overcoming hierarchies*: Hierarchies between statutory and migrant social work, between different cultures, and between social worker and client need to be dismantled. Relationships on an equal footing, a dialogue between different sets of values and "collaboration with service users" (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022, 213) would facilitate mutual transformation and help a "relational spirituality" (Abdullah, 2022, 241) emerge. This would, furthermore, let social work be conducted "with, rather than, for" (Schröer & Ürek, 2022, 224) clients. Notwithstanding, inequalities and differences in status will not be completely overcome but should be made visible and critically considered in comparative studies.
- *Exposing hostilities*: Service users may face "xenophobia, discrimination and stigmatisation if they were identified as Muslims" (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022, 213). Social work should therefore expose any form of overt or hidden Islamophobia, which fosters "a sense of isolation and vulnerability" (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022, 252) among Muslims, no matter whether it is conducted in the name of secularism, integration, defence of human rights or whatsoever, or whether it is

practiced by non-Muslims or Islam-unfriendly Muslims. This does not, however, mean that it should remain silent if some cultural practices violate general 'principles of social work' (IFSW). At the same time, Islamic social work should take into account that there are "multiple sources of structural oppression" (Afrouz & Crisp, 2022, 213) and thus avoid attributing them all to Islamophobia. In this way, it becomes clear that Islamophobia, while an important challenge (Schmid & Sheikhzadegan, 2022, 5–6), should not be seen as a key category. To do so would be no less one-sided than a constant focus on prevention against radicalisation in social work (Schmid & Brodard, 2020). Thus, the different empirical examples in this volume also show that the challenges and concerns of Islamic social work are much more diverse.

These methodological, hermeneutical and ethical guidelines cannot only be applied in relation to Islam and Muslims but can also help shape alternative approaches to social work in a broader context. Moreover, they allow for a balance between a strictly universalistic approach and a relativistic particularism and include both an ability to learn and a willingness to face conflicts including those with a cultural focus.

The contributions to this volume go beyond the theoretical aspects of alternative social work to also present practical models. As a grassroots association the Meeting and Training Centre for Muslim Women (*Begegnungs- und Fortbildungszentrum muslimischer Frauen*, BFmF) in Germany can be seen as an example of a bottom-up initiative that enjoys a growing professionalism and has already become a recognised service-providing institution (Schröer & Ürek, 2022). The broad networking and cooperation of this association represents a counterweight to potential "divisive and isolationist" (Hussain, 2022, 122) tendencies. However, this case cannot be generalised, as it has come into existence within the framework of a developed welfare state that offers support for FBOs and considers them as partners (Schmid, 2022). Comparable development conditions hardly exist in any other context. Furthermore, there is a risk of idealising this single case, with its success story as "a pioneer in the development of an innovative, model Muslim social institution" (Schröer & Ürek, 2022, 227) without practicing necessary self-critique. For example, the assumed "bridging function" (Schröer & Ürek, 2022, 227) implies a binary concept of German and migrant cultures, neglecting transcultural overlaps and hybrid identities. The cooperation model between welfare providers and the state also opens up Islamic social work to much larger target groups beyond Muslims (Brodard, 2022). In the case of BFmF the supposed composition of the beneficiaries and the actual mix of beneficiaries could be examined more closely. Lastly, this case illustrates that it is possible to simultaneously represent social work and Islamic social work which raises the question of how the adjective 'Islamic' can be determined at all.

Islamic Social Work, between Emancipation and 'Identity Trap'

The final question to be discussed is what the 'Islamic' in Islamic social work consists of: it is ambivalent, as what makes Islamic social work specific and what "added value" (Brodard, 2022, 40) it represents may be queried. However, depending on the specific standards and requirements of the respective country, there are varying degrees of pressure within welfare systems placed on Islamic social work to secularise itself (Schmid, 2022, 113–114). The discrepancy between an ambition to demonstrate the specificities of Islamic social work and the requirement to become secularised carries a high potential for tensions, if not outright conflict. The attribute 'Islamic' can be applied to different elements of Islamic social work: providers, beneficiaries and underlying thought. From a strictly secular point of view, the attribution as Islamic may have both a demarcation function and a normative character:

> To constitute something as "Islamic" is thus necessarily an act of authorization, legitimation and inclusion: we are authorizing and legitimating that Islamic thing as being constituted by the normative value "Islam," and are including it with other things that we are similarly authorizing and legitimating in normative terms. (Ahmed, 2016, 107)

Such acts represent a great challenge, not least in view of the diversity and contradictions of phenomena and positions subsumed under Islamic social work. This can also lead to disputes about whether something is 'sufficiently' or 'appropriately' Islamic.

Labelling a certain approach as Islamic social work is firstly the expression of a continuing presence of religion in both individual and social life. However, it can also be the expression of an attempt to "Islamise knowledge" (Al-Faruqi, 1988), in order to promote a collective identity and possibly oppose secularism. Placing 'Islamic' values, methodologies and practices in the foreground increases the risk of a conflict with mainstream social work. This approach, which has rather been developed by authors from outside the Western world (Albrithen, 2019; Ragab, 2016) can be understood as a postcolonial emancipatory endeavour. The debate shows that it is a question which goes beyond social work to encompass other disciplines. The question of demarcation and closer definition, however, does not only relate to the attribute 'Islamic', but also to the scope of social work. Some of the authors of this volume link Islamic social work to neighbouring domains, such as chaplaincy (Brodard, 2022) or religious education (Schröer & Ürek, 2022, 223), that face similar challenges. However, chaplaincy comprises prayer, Qur'an recitation and exchanges about questions of faith; religious education refers to contextualising religious knowledge practice, which clearly legitimates its 'Islamic' character. Consequently, a comparison of social work with these two domains tends to exacerbate the profile issue.

Several contributors refer to the issue of the 'Islamic' in social work. While pleading for an open concept of Islamic social work, Kurnaz sees a clear limitation here: "It is true however that such dynamism can lead to uncertainty when tackling the question of what 'Islamic social work' actually is." (2022, 145)

Cheruvallil-Contractor, Halford and Phiri emphasise how "religious identities are continually evolving in response to religious and cultural norms" (2022, 93). Hussain identifies the risk that "the pursuit of a specific 'Islamic' framework for social actions" (2022, 132) can turn into "a highly parochialist view" (Hussain, 2022, 132), based on public relations and competition. Schröer and Ürek also point out that "there are currently no homogeneous answers to the question as to what exactly the adjective Islamic means in the term Islamic social work" (2022, 221). On the other hand, assuming something like a "Muslim collective consciousness" (Abdullah, 2022, 234) or a "common belief system and shared familiarity in Muslim culture and tradition" (Abdullah, 2022, 242) when speaking about Islamic social work can be seen as an attempt to provide a unifying normative basis, but risks overlooking the diversity of Islamic practices and faith convictions. While all contributions in this volume are careful to differentiate and to be sensitive to this diversity, there is still a danger of essentialising.

One possibility would be to see the sense of 'Islamic' determined by the 'Muslimness' of the protagonists, through what they do and articulate "as a potential site or locus for expression and articulation of being Muslim" (Ahmed, 2016, 538). However, Islamic social work does not necessarily signify "community social work" (Schmid & Sheikhzadegan, 2022, 7) in a narrow sense and can also mean the use of Islamic religious ideas and spiritual concepts (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2022; Abdullah, 2022). In this sense, Islamic social work is determined by "special reference to the Muslim tradition" (Kurnaz, 2022, 144) and Muslim protagonists engaging with it. Traces of this can be found both within Muslim communities and in more secular settings, e. g. in partnerships between different organisations or in the social commitments of individuals in civil society. A Muslim motivation and meaning that is constitutive for the actions of Muslim protagonists does not necessarily have to lead to a *proprium* of Islamic social work, as has likewise been argued in the context of Christian charity (Haslinger, 2009, 192–197). The services and activities provided by Islamic social work would in many cases, or perhaps even most, correspond to those of other providers. Muslim social work is therefore not 'social work plus'. Here again, the concept of the generalisation of values can be utilised, as it enables a combination of "general content on one hand, and specific roots and binding forces on the other" (Schmid, 2022, 102). Universal principles of social work and specific cultural or religiously shaped legitimations and resources can therefore go together, simply because universal principles remain dependent on particular foundations and underpinnings:

> (…) through this process of generalization, people who feel bound to a tradition find new ways to articulate it by engaging with social change or the representatives of other traditions. If this occurs on both sides of a process of engagement involving different value traditions it may lead to a new and authentic sense of commonality. (Joas, 2013, 181)

Traditional ties are the starting point of a process that requires exchange with the social context as well as with other traditions. In this way, commonalities can be discovered without having to reach a complete consensus. Instead, this exchange leads to a "mutual modification of our own traditions as well as finding stimuli for

their renewal" (Joas, 2013, 181). The different theological and ethical contributions in this volume can be seen as an expression of such a process of change and renewal.

In addition to this more structural argument, a look at the individual can help to further differentiate the question of the 'Islamic' in social work. In Sahin's concept of "relational autonomy" people are viewed as "socially embedded beings with intersecting identity markers of gender, ethnicity, class and religion" (Sahin, 2022, 184). Such intersectionality requires prudence in attributing the label "Muslim", as there is a risk of homogenisation, instead of focusing on "multiple realities and layered identities" (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al., 2022, 84) – not only on an individual level, but also in the collective practice of Islamic social work. Therefore, Cheruvallil-Contractor, Halford and Phiri argue that individual narratives, instead of collective ones, should stand in the foreground, and that: "This does not require new classifications within social work" (2022, 94). Similarly, caution is needed when talking about Muslim service users. In this sense, Afrouz and Crisp emphasise "a complex array of factors including personal attitudes and perspectives, family and community obligations, and perceptions as to the acceptability of wearing hijab" (2022, 211). The complexity and diversity of identities must be underlined, as opposed to the widespread, one-sided attributions in the style of a "singular-affiliation view" (Sen, 2006, 25) that trap people into a "solitarist understanding of identity" (Sen, 2006, 79):

> Muslims, like all other people in the world, have many different pursuits, and not all of their priorities and values need be placed within their singular identity of being Islamic. (Sen, 2006, 14)

In this sense, it would also be wrong to consider Islamic social work to be devoid of any characteristics other than being Islamic. As several contributions of this volume have shown, the social context and the respective welfare system constitute key formative factors for Islamic social work. It would therefore make more sense to ascribe other attributes to it, depending on the particular case. As already emphasised in the introduction to this volume: "The minimal condition for social work to be characterised as Islamic is that at least the underlying social thought has a connection to Islam." (Schmid & Sheikhzadegan, 2022, 11) However, this one element can be complemented by others with very different frames of reference: for instance, social work can be both Islamic and society-critical, political, humanistic, human rights-based, gender-sensitive, etc. The category 'Islamic' then becomes more inclusive and cannot be dismissed anymore as "only a motley crew of similarities which we cannot tie together" (Ahmed, 2016, 242).

Another observation that can be made is that Christian social work is more rarely spoken of (Mahler, 2018; Scales & Kelly, 2016). If 'general' social work allows for a plural spectrum of possibilities and is open to cultural, religious and spiritual diversity, it may be possible to dispense with the addition of the attribute 'Islamic'. This would make 'Islamic' a provisional attribute, which would mainly make sense in the context of integration debates. Once this has become a self-evident and recognised part of a larger whole, this attribute may be dropped. A cautious use of the attribute 'Islamic', mindful of its different nuances of meaning, attributions and discursive contexts is necessary.

Such considerations represent permanent challenges that cannot be easily resolved. It will be a matter of finding ways to address these challenges, characterised by the visibility of specific profiles on the one hand, and communicability within a wider framework of plural society on the other. As many of the authors of this volume emphasise: Islamic social work is both a practice and a discipline in the making. In that respect, this exploration ends with the invitation to further exploration.

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