‘The Cup of Kindness’? Dominant Social Norms and Muslims’ Social Integration in Scotland

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Abstract

Since the 9/11 bombings in New York, and the 7/7 bombings in London, Muslims’ integration in the UK has been under intense scrutiny. Muslim integration, however, has long been a matter of debate in Britain, revolving around the maintenance of Muslims’ distinctive identity and practice. For instance, David Cameron (Cameron, 2011), Britain’s then Prime Minister, announced at the Munich Security Conference that “state multiculturalism” has encouraged “different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream”. In criticizing multiculturalism, most critics mainly refer to Muslims as being less integrated into wider society than people from other minority groups, and Muslims are shown to be disloyal. The complexity of Muslims’ integration and its dependency on different social, structural and cultural factors are, however, mostly less studied. This paper is designed to understand the social and cultural barriers to Muslim integration. In doing so, it aims to explore Muslims’ integrational strategies to deal with these barriers. Findings of this paper draw on research that involved 43 semi-structured interviews with Muslims across Scotland’s major cities and small towns.

Keywords: Integration, Islamophobia, Muslims, Religion, Scotland

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1. Introduction

Since the 1970s and particularly after the 9/11 and 7/7 bombings in New York and London, in criticizing multiculturalism most critics mainly referred to Muslims as being less integrated into wider society than people from other minority groups (Cameron, 2011, Phillips 2016; Dolan 2016). In this context, Muslims were sometimes shown to be disloyal (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010), a national identity threat (Goodhart, 2004; Chakraborti & Garland, 2009, p. 45) or have been seen as potential domestic enemies (see Ahmed, 2003). It is, however, important to note that Muslim integration is a complicated issue and depends on different factors. Social and structural factors, for instance, play an important part in this process. As Ager and Strang (2004, p. 4) argue, *language and cultural knowledge* alongside *safety and stability* are key facilitating factors for minorities' integration and equal *rights and citizenship* are the vital "foundations" for this process. Other factors such as relational and cultural issues (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309) and religious boundaries (Jacobson, 1997b, pp. 248-9; Modood, 2005, p. 31; Robinson, 2009, p. 448; Joppke, 2012, p. 4) are also significant. Different types of discriminatory practices and inequalities, such as institutional and individual racism and Islamophobia (Fekete, 2008; Robinson, 2009, p. 452) can also affect Muslim integration. Taking the importance of all the above factors into consideration, this paper examines Muslim integrational strategies and discusses the importance of different barriers to Muslim integration in Scotland.

The integration of ethnic/faith minorities, including Muslims, has been "discussed mainly from the *majority* vantage point and little attention is paid to the views of minorities" (Fekete, 2008, p. 4). Muslims' integration, especially their *social* integration, in

Scotland has been even less studied, and much of the studies were focused more on economic or educational integration (Hussain & Miller, 2006; British Council Scotland Survey, 2010; Kidd & Jamieson, 2011). This paper, by focusing on Muslims' experiences and views, explores the importance and problematic nature of social integration for Muslims in the Scottish context where Muslims, as the largest non-Christian faith group, constitute around 1.4% of the population with 77,000 people (National Records of Scotland, 2013, p. 32).

2. Research Methodology

The findings of this paper draw on research carried out in 2011 (July to December), covering the experiences of 43 Muslims (of different generations and gender) across Scotland's major cities and small towns (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Falkirk, Dunfermline, East Kilbride, and Stirling). As the category "Muslim" is ethnically, socially, and denominationally a diverse category (beside geographical and gender differences), different participants from different ethnic (from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Kenyan, Nigerian, Scottish, Iraqi, Malawian, Egyptian and Lebanese backgrounds), social (different age groups, employment status, and education) and denominational backgrounds (12 Shia and 31 Sunni Muslims) were recruited to reflect such diversity. In terms of operationalization, the target population was Scotland's Muslims, who currently define and describe themselves as Muslim (whether by religion or ethnicity, upbringing or culture), carrying British citizenship or permanently resident in Scotland. The most important characteristics of Muslims, however, lay in their visibility and religiosity (the degree of commitment to their religion), which were the focus of this research as Islam plays an

important part in their identity and practice (Modood, 2005, p. 31; Esposito, 2011, p. 158). However, the level of religiosity or commitment to religion is not the same amongst all Muslims; some may not practice the religion, or may only practice some of its rites rather than making a full commitment (Jacobson, 1997b, pp. 251-2; Ameli *et al.*, 2004, p. 26; Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012, p. 131). In this regard, this research divides participants into three main categories of *practicing*, *less-practicing*, and *non-practicing*. The first category relates to participants who make a full commitment to the religion and observe Islamic law, especially the "5 pillars of Islam" (Meer, 2010, p. 59; Esposito, 2011, p. 18). In contrast, the third category refers to those people who identify themselves as Muslim in terms of culture, ethnicity or birth, (Ameli *et al*., 2004, p. 21) but do not practice any religious observances such as the 5 pillars of Islam or the Islamic dietary law. Finally, the *less-practicing* Muslims are those who do not fit into the first and third categories. More specifically, it refers to those people who identify themselves as Muslim but do not practice all Islamic rules; those who, for example, do not perform their daily prayers or fast in Ramadan but still practice some other rules such as avoiding alcohol consumption and consuming only *halal* meat. Although this research is not a comprehensive and representative study of Muslims, taking the diversity of Muslims into account means that the diversity of Muslims is reflected in the data.

To gain a more in-depth understanding of Muslims' experiences and accounts on integration, rather than merely providing quantitative data, this research applied a qualitative approach for its data collection and analysis. Applying a qualitative approach allowed the achievement of a better understanding of the social interaction of Scottish Muslims in context, as well as the significance of their perceptions of others' attitudes and behaviors,

in order to understand how these perceptions can affect their integration strategies. The qualitative data was derived from 43 qualitative, semi-structured, interviews in which individual participants' experiences and perceptions were the main source of data (Blaikie, 2000, p. 191). These qualitative interviews involved in-depth and loosely structured forms of interviews, one of the most commonly recognized forms of qualitative research (Mason, 1996, p. 38). The qualitative interview was widely used by many researchers (e.g. Jacobson, 1997a, 1997b; Hopkins, 2004, 2007; Kidd & Jamieson, 2011) to study Muslims' perceptions and life experiences. Given the small sample size and non-representative sampling, this study has no intention of generalizing its findings to a larger population. Having said that, the qualitative and in-depth data offers an insight (Ritchie *et al*. 2003, p. 251) that can be helpful in understanding practicing Muslims' social integration in Scotland.

To access interviewees, this research adopted the selective sampling method (based on its key variables of religiosity, location and generation), however the main strategy to access these Muslims (due to the lack of any sample frame) was a form of convenient approach through university, mosques, Islamic centres, Muslim organisations, and social groups. Accessing Muslims in towns and small cities was more difficult than accessing Muslims in major cities. This was mainly due to the lack of any electronic means of communication and contact, such as email addresses or an active website, which thus required personal presence and contact. Interviews were carried out in different places such as houses, Islamic centers and mosques, university meeting rooms and cafés, based on respondents' preferences.

The collected data was analyzed using the Grounded Theory

analysis method due to its well-described, well-organized, and systematic process of qualitative data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Accordingly, all interviews (which were fully transcribed) were coded in the framework of Nvivo (a qualitative analysis software) through an initial and axial coding process based upon Grounded Theory's analytical guidelines. More specifically, the coding process started with *open/initial coding*, which offered initial categories and concepts such as racial abuse, religious discrimination, Islamophobia, assimilatory practices, alcohol and identity rejection. This stage was rather descriptive and substantial, in which began, the labelling, categorization and to some extent the interpretation of the experiences, perceptions and meanings of a specific concept. Working with open coding on 10 interviews allowed many concepts and categories to be identified. Many of these concepts and categories were linked and related to one another in a hierarchical order. Then began the *axial coding* stage to identify the potential relationship between different concepts and categories and develop them into conceptual families (Strauss & Corbin 1990). In so doing, caution was taken as not to impose any biases onto the data from my own prior knowledge or existing theories. The identified codes were also kept active by using constant comparison among the codes and seeking to keep a record (annotating in Nvivo) of the context in which the properties/indicators had been constructed by the respondent (Glaser, 1978). Meanwhile, the initial analysis occurred through memo writing in order to keep a record of potential hypotheses and ideas generated during coding and initial analysis. Finally, through selective coding, the relationship between different issues of social identity, Islamophobia and integration were developed. The selective and theoretical analyses suggested that Scottish dominant social norms can hinder Muslims'-especially practicing Muslims'-social integration.

3. Theoretical Framework

Scholarly discussion on the conception of integration mainly revolves around its relation to community cohesion and minority rights; where the necessity of maintaining a sense of common national identity and cultural continuity in a host society is highlighted, and the right of maintaining immigrants or minority groups' is also recognised. The main debate in this regard is how to find a way for a society to incorporate its minorities, so that it could both satisfy their aspirations to maintain cherished ways of life and at the same time maintain itself as a community of common belonging. Therefore, the incorporation of these new members into society is a question of growing importance. Different scholars' responses to this question have mainly revolved around the concepts of assimilation and integration. Assimilation refers to a process in which the newcomers become similar to their host society (Brubaker, 2001), whereas the term integration, mainly proposed by multiculturalists, refers to a state of "recognition and respect" (Kymlicka, 1995; Hall, 2000; Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2007). The term integration, however, is contested, and there is no single definition or theory of immigrant integration (Castles *et al.*, 2002; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). One common theoretical approach to integration was through distinguishing integration from assimilation (Kymlicka, 2001; Parekh, 2006; Modood, 2007; Pfeffer, 2014) or by parallelizing them (Brubaker, 2001). Distinguishing assimilation from integration, Pfeffer (2014) proposes three main distinctions; first, "there is a fundamental normative difference between a host society that invokes laws to incorporate its immigrants in a way that is respectful of, and is willing to celebrate their diverse practices (which is indicative of integration) and a host society that seeks to attenuate differences between minorities and the host society". Second, "assimilation is

often a unidirectional process insofar as it places most of the expectations on immigrants. […] Conversely, integration ought to be viewed as a dialogical process, meaning that it should be achieved through the cooperation and deliberation of both actors (Pfeffer, 2014, p. 354). Finally, "integration can be defined on the basis of participation in, as opposed to degree of similarity with, the host society. […] However, just because integration requires convergence on liberal democratic values does not mean that cultural groups need to give up traditional practices" (Pfeffer, 2014, p. 354).

Immigrant integration is also debated and theorized from more practical and functional perspectives, which highlights the interaction between the social and functional dimensions and the influence of the state (Korac, 2003). In Britain, Ager and Strang (2008) argue that integration has been considered to be part of the discussion on *social inclusion/exclusion* and *race relations*. From this perspective, the importance of social and structural barriers to integration was highlighted. The importance of structural barriers to ethnic/faith minority groups was supported by empirical research (Berry, 1997; Hale, 2000; Hickman *et al.*, 2008). Different types of discriminatory practices and inequalities such as institutional and individual racism and Islamophobia can also affect Muslims' integration (Fekete, 2008; Robinson, 2009, p. 452), however, there is a dearth of research on how the perception of discrimination is related to immigrants' overall adaptation (Berry, 1997). Taking the importance of social and structural factors into consideration, Ager and Strang (2004, p. 9) define an integrated individual or group within a society as "when they achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc.". It is however important to note that the integration of Muslims is not limited to social and structural issues, as relational and cultural barriers are

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also important. The importance of "relationships with the host community, the importance of retaining one's own cultural connections, shared values and the need to ensure safety and security" (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309) are also important in affecting minorities' integration strategies. From this perspective, the importance of relational and cultural issues such as religious boundaries and cultural barriers is better highlighted. Religion and religious identity for many Muslims, is central to their sense of who they are and how their behavior in all spheres of life should be (Jacobson, 1997b). Similarly, Modood (2005) argues that religion is central to many Muslims, and any new ways of living in Britain and becoming a part of British society had to be ultimately justified in terms of compatibility with the Muslim faith and the welfare of Muslims. Joppke (2012) also argues that the religious identity of practicing Muslims creates boundaries for their cultural and social integration. Their identity politics, however, have also been seen as an important trigger for increased civic integration (Choudhury, 2007; Meer, 2010). As Hussain and Miller (2006) argue, Muslim Scottish identity was adopted as a tool of integration, rather than separation.

Taking all these factors into consideration, this paper examines Muslims' integrational strategies and discusses the importance of different barriers to their integration in Scotland. Issues articulated here are factors and concerns that were identified by participants as barriers. These mainly fall into structural/social and cultural barriers. The former include Islamophobia and unwelcoming attitudes and Scottish dominant social norms and assimilation, while the latter constitute the discussion around how some Muslim religious practices, such as not consuming alcohol and avoiding mixed-sex meetings, can function as cultural barriers.

4. Structural/Social Barriers

4.1. Islamophobia and Unwelcoming Attitudes

Unwelcoming attitudes were one of the main barriers to Muslim social integration. There was a perception among some Muslim interviewees that some Scots have no interest in integrating and interacting with Muslims. For example, Adil was one of 4 participants who asserted this view. He is a practicing Muslim man and living in Falkirk. Adil has an undergraduate degree and was working in a bank in Falkirk. He said that his neighbors and his colleagues did not show any interest in interacting and socializing with him. Adil was economically and educationally integrated into Scottish society, however he highlighted his neighborhood and workplace's unwelcoming approach towards Muslims as being the main explanation for his limited social integration. Later in the interview, he asserted that he knew that Islam encourages Muslims to interact with others, especially with one's neighbors, but that others' unwelcoming approach stopped him from achieving greater integration. This can imply that there might even be some religious aspirations for greater social integration; however, the experience or perception of social avoidance can hinder it. This supports Modood's (2007, p. 48) argument that integration occurs "where processes of social interaction are seen as two-way, and where members of the majority community, as well as immigrants and ethnic minorities are required to do something; so the latter cannot alone be blamed for failing (or not trying) to integrate".

Adil felt that his colleagues' unwelcoming approach was associated with their stereotypical perception that Muslims are "outdated." Associating Muslims with backwardness or seeing them as "outdated" can arise from having Islamophobic views about Muslims. This can be explained by the argument of the

Runnymede Trust (1997, p. 6), which describes one facet of Islamophobia as seeing Islam or Muslims, as "them," inferior to non-Muslims or "us". Seeing Muslims as "outdated" and different can affect people's social relationship with Muslims. Having such views about Muslims can make them less favored in society. This argument is supported by quantitative research that suggests that Muslims are the least favored religious minority in Scotland (British Council Scotland Survey, 2010). The analysis of the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2010) also showed that "Muslims attracted the most discriminatory response, with 23% saying they would be unhappy if a Muslim formed a relationship with a family member, falling to 18% for a Hindu, 9% for someone who is Jewish and just 2% for a Christian" (Ormston *et al.*, 2011, p. 22).

Unwelcoming approaches were not only reported in small cities, as other participants from larger cities such as Edinburgh also reported such approaches. For example, Kasim, who, like Adil, was a practicing Muslim man with an undergraduate degree and was working in a bank branch in Edinburgh, had the same perception of being socially avoided. Kasim especially highlighted the importance of identity non-recognition as another reason for having an unwelcoming approach towards Muslims. Kasim stated that interaction with the *majority* Scottish people was very difficult because they did not accept him as being Scottish, as one of *them*, and thus, did not wish to interact with him. He said that interaction with people from other ethnic/faith minority groups was much easier than with indigenous people. This example implies an association between unwelcoming approaches in social relationships towards Muslims and the non-recognition of Muslims' national identity as fellow Scottish at the grassroots level. This supports Bond's (2006) argument that "even those who enjoy full formal citizenship may still, in the eyes of the *majority*, be

excluded from belonging to the nation in which they reside." This can imply that Muslims can be seen as *others* or *outsiders* at the grassroots level, and be thus less favored for social integration or interaction. Considering Adil's and Kasim's social status, as having been educated in Scottish universities and employed at Scottish public institutions, it can be suggested that even those Muslims with higher social status can be regarded as less favored by some of the *majority* on the grounds of Islamophobic attitudes or identity non-recognition.

The examples of Adil and Kasim also imply that such unwelcoming approaches to greater social interaction can hinder Muslims' social integration with *majority* Scots. As was evident in both examples, Adil was not socializing with his neighbors and colleagues, and Kasim tended to interact with other minority people. Considering Kasim's example, this implies that he finds socializing and interacting with the *majority* group members difficult. Muslims interact with other minority people who were found to be more welcoming than the *majority*. Such drifting away from the *majority* and leaning towards other minorities was also evident in other examples. For instance, Sanaz found other minorities to be more welcoming than *majority* Scots. She was a practicing Muslim woman with hijab, and was a housewife, but was also working in some volunteer groups. Like Adil and Kasim, she was integrated into the Scottish educational system and received an undergraduate degree. She stated that she felt that she was avoided by Scottish majority group members in her children's schools, while she found people from other minority ethnic groups to be more welcoming. Sanaz particularly highlighted her perception that people from the *majority* group may dislike Muslims on the ground of their racial or religious characteristics. This can imply that having such views about Muslims can make the

majority unwilling to integrate and interact. After experiencing unwelcoming approaches Sanaz found people from other minority groups more welcoming, and thus tended to interact with them rather than with the *majority*.

Another possible implication of feeling unwelcome, even though not widespread, can be inter-community isolation. This was evident in two examples, Ghader and Ehsan. Ghader, who was an ex-self-employed practicing Muslim man from Pakistan, who, in highlighting the negative impact of discrimination on his sense of belonging to Scotland, stated that the he felt more at home when he is in the Punjabi community. In another example, Ehsan, who was also a self-employed shopkeeper, pointed out that he is more comfortable either in the Pakistani community or in Pakistan. Ehsan also highlighted the issue of his safety, stressing that he did not feel safe and comfortable in gatherings of Scots. This is similar to de Lima's (2004) finding that social exclusion can lead to social isolation and a maintaining of the cultural identities of ethnic minority groups in Scottish rural areas. However, it is important to note that the trend of having parallel lives was absent in the Scottish context (Hussain & Miller, 2006). A comparison of the examples of Ghader and Ehsan with other participants in this study reveals the specificity of their examples, which thus cannot be generalized. For instance, the examples of Adil, Kasim, and Sanaz, who also reported social avoidance, show that none of these participants tended to have separated or parallel lives. These participants were all integrated into the Scottish educational system and two of them (Adil and Kasim) were economically integrated. Social avoidance, thus, limited these participants' social integration, rather than lead them towards having separate lives.

Ghader and Ehsan had daily experiences of Islamophobia, and

their limited integration may be associated with their high rate of Islamophobic experiences. As stated earlier, Islamophobic attitudes, such as seeing Muslims as inferior, or not wanting to have a social relationship with Muslims, could lead to the isolation of Muslims from the *majority* Scots. Further to their daily experience of Islamophobia, Ghader and Ehsan's belonged to the poor class, which could have also affected their social integration. They were both first generation self-employed immigrants with English language difficulties and no Scottish education. English language difficulties can also affect their social integration by prompting them to only socialize within their Punjabi community, which uses the same language.

Some participants pointed to some of the Scottish government's policies or programs that could also encourage Islamophobia, and thus lead to the increased social isolation of Muslims. For example, Azadeh, a practicing Muslim woman, asserted that commemorating the 9/11 attacks' anniversaries can indirectly spread Islamophobia and lead to the dislike of Muslims. By referring to her experience, she explained how associating 9/11 with Muslims at school singled out her nephew and all students looked at him differently as a result. This example highlights the important role of public institutions such as schools and the government in spreading or fighting Islamophobia. In another example, by supporting some of the Scottish government's policies such as the "One Scotland" campaign, Samad, a practicing Muslim man, stated that the government tries to promote diversity and equality through different programs, but it is the media's Islamophobic representation of Islam and Muslims that halts that process. The examples of Azadeh and Samad raise important questions about the effectiveness of some anti-racism programs, such as the "One Scotland" campaign, because on the one hand, the government tries to promote diversity

and integration, but on the other, other programs can spread Islamophobia and hatred against Muslims. The important role of the media in hindering integration by spreading Islamophobia is the focus of the next section.

4.2. Dominant Social Norms and Assimilation

The prevalence of the dominant culture of alcohol consumption in Scotland's social life (Bromley *et al*., 2005; Scottish Government, 2008) served as the most important barrier to Muslims' social integration. As alcohol consumption, sale, and purchase is prohibited in Islam (Esposito, 2011), almost all participants identified the dominant practice of drinking culture as an important hindrance to Muslims' greater integration into Scottish social life. The significance of this issue was due to the fact that many participants perceived social norms around drinking as exhibiting an 'assimilatory "attitude and approach" towards Muslims' social integration.

For example, Kasim, who is a practicing Muslim man, had a perception that integration, for many Scots, means assimilation into Scottish mainstream culture. He stated that if he did not assimilate to that culture, he would not be considered "Scottish and as one of *them"*. He expressed that such restricted views on integration, that require Muslims to give up their religious and moral practices, is a big barrier for further social integration. The example of Kasim highlights the contradiction between the dominant practice of some social norms and Muslims' religious identity and beliefs. It also suggests that the dominant practice of alcohol consumption was perceived as an assimilatory approach to integration rather than what Muslims expected integration to be. As the most common

views of integration amongst participants entailed the respect and recognition of Muslims' identity, culture, and religion, such perception of assimilatory attitudes and practices could hinder their integration.

In another example, Ali, also a practicing Muslim man, said that being asked to take part in the dominant culture of alcohol consumption for Muslims means a total change in their identity and a clear assimilatory demand. He also felt that some of the Scots consider alcohol consumption to be a yardstick of integration.

These two examples, as was also evident in other examples, can imply the importance of alcohol in Scottish culture and social events. This supports previous research by Hopkins, (2004), which suggested the importance of alcohol, pubs and club culture as a facet of Scottish culture in which Muslims could not take part. This finding is supported by the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2004), which shows that "alcohol is seen as a central part of Scottish culture, with 64% agreeing that "*drinking is a major part of Scottish way of life*" (Bromley *et al*., 2005, p. 1). This survey also showed that around half of men (47%) view alcohol as a *social lubricant*, agreeing that *"it is easier to enjoy a social event if you've had a drink"* (Bromley *et al*., 2005, p. 1). It has also been argued that offering alcohol for some Scots can represent generosity (The Social Issues Research Centre 1998, p. 23), and it might be for this reason that alcohol is served at many social events, and all guests are invited to participate in drinking "the cup of kindness". However, it is important to note that such dominant cultural and social practices are perceived as an assimilatory demand for some Muslims.

Objections to alcohol at social events can have a negative effect on the integration of Muslims, such as avoiding being present at

any event where alcohol is involved. For example, Zahra, who is a practicing Muslim woman, explained how assimilatory expectations, such as taking part in drinking parties, make integration too difficult, particularly for Muslim women in the workplace. Zahra stated that because she does not consume alcohol, she would not go to places where alcohol is served, which in turn affects her job promotion. This refers to another Islamic code that prohibits being present or working in places where alcohol is served; even though this prohibition is a matter of religious and cultural debate amongst Muslims living in Western countries (Esposito, 2011), many Muslims such as Zahra, Kasim, Ali, and other participants practice it. The above example could also highlight the fact that the majority's lack of knowledge about these norms could function as a big barrier to integration. Inviting Muslims to parties and social events that mainly involve alcohol consumption, might be intended to show respect and kindness, but are considered to be an assimilatory attitude by some respondents.

The perception of the majority's assimilatory approach to integration may make Muslims think that the majority wants to change their religion and culture, rather their religious identity. This may result in them taking a more defensive position on the issue of attending any event where alcohol is served. Being the most important identity for some respondents, challenges to their religious identity by assimilation may make them think that social integration may end up changing it.

To sum up, this section suggests that some Muslim participants saw the culture of drinking and going out as effectively demanding assimilation. These findings support previous research in Scotland and England that suggested that there was a feeling amongst "longer established Muslim communities that they still are not

accepted or valued in society, and that the rhetoric of integration is often underpinned by an expectation for minority communities to assimilate" (Kidd & Jamieson, 2011, p. 26; cf. Fekete, 2008, p. 10; Change Institute, 2009, p. 32; British Council Scotland Survey, 2010, p. 30). It was also evident from discussions carried out by Masud, (2005) with Scottish Muslim women that "they felt that they were being forced to change their behavior as a consequence of the London bombings to avoid being labelled as 'terrorists'". Previous research, such as a British Council Scotland survey (2010, p. 30) showed that such perceptions amongst Muslims were not unfounded, because there was a view among non-Muslim Scots – particularly those who were older and from a lower socio-economic status – that Muslims should completely adopt Scottish customs.

The perception of the majority's assimilatory attitude, however, was not common amongst all participants. Some participants saw offering alcohol as an assimilatory attitude, whereas some others saw it as lack of knowledge. For instance, Kasim and Ali, who also reported daily experiences of Islamophobia, felt that asking Muslims to participate in drinking culture was an assimilatory demand. It can also be argued that these participants' experiences and perceptions of the prevalence of Islamophobia could affect their perception of the majority's assimilatory attitudes. In contrast, Sanaz and Zahra, with rare or no experiences of Islamophobia, associated "being asked to participate in drinking culture" with a lack of knowledge about Islamic moral and religious codes of practice rather than assimilatory attitudes. Sanaz, for instance, felt that if the *majority* group members received enough knowledge about the social integration limits of Muslims, they would make an effort to facilitate such considerations. The example of Sanaz implies that some Muslims believe that if the *majority* Scots had more knowledge about Muslims, they would try to accommodate

such needs in their everyday interactions with Muslim fellow citizens or friends. Further to the example of Sanaz, who suggested that Muslims should make more of an effort to take part in various public events and raise the awareness of the majority about Muslims' limits, Sadiq pointed to his own experience of organizing a university conference in a non-alcoholic restaurant. Sadiq, a practicing Muslim who was studying at Glasgow University, highlighted the importance of raising the awareness of people, and asserted that if Muslims speak about their condition, then the majority would accommodate their conditions.

These participants, therefore, felt that if the majority were more aware, then they would respect and accommodate their religious needs. In other words, the expectation of assimilation could sometimes be unwitting, and arise from well-intended efforts to show respect and kindness; so, the lack of knowledge from both sides can cause misunderstanding. Raising awareness about Muslims' limits and the *majority's* actual intentions could promote interaction.

5. Cultural Barriers

5.1. Religious Codes of Practice

Cultural barriers, by and large, are related to some moral and religious practices that Muslims tended to preserve when socially integrating into society. Based upon Muslims' religious identity and their commitment to their religion, any social interaction has to be within the framework of Islamic rules and laws in order to be considered as permissible - *halal* - integration. Practicing some of these rules - such as wearing Hijab, avoiding mixed-sex meetings, and alcohol consumption - are the most common factors that limit

Muslims' social integration in the Scotland, where the contrary were the social norm.

As mentioned in the last section, not taking part in alcohol consumption was by far the most important issue that was raised by the participants. Illustrating the importance of this issue, the data showed that almost all of the participants stated that they avoided alcohol consumption. Not taking part in this practice can limit Muslim social integration because many social events in Scotland revolve around drinking. However, the more important issue was being present in places where alcohol was served, which can have a greater impact on Muslim social integration. Believing the former may result in attending and participating in social events, but not drinking alcohol; however, believing the latter would mean not attending any social events or parties where alcohol is served. Despite the common opinion on the avoidance of alcohol consumption among practicing and less practicing participants, there was some division on the issue of being present in places where alcohol was served.

My data suggested that practicing Muslims tended to avoid such places, but some less-practicing Muslims did not mind attending events where alcohol was served. Considering the debate on the prohibition of being present in places where alcohol is served (Esposito, 2011), such a difference stems from the interpretation of those Muslims who also include its serving areas (bars) inside the prohibition of alcohol consumption. In the context of Scottish culture, in which alcohol consumption is a dominant social norm, commitment to this belief can greatly limit Muslims' socialization and social integration.

Illustrating the position of practicing Muslims on attending social events where alcohol was served, Jafar, a practicing Muslim

man, said that he avoided places where alcohol was served. He said that despite the dominance of alcohol consumption in Scottish mainstream social culture, being a Muslim meant he could not participate in such a culture. Jafar related the lack of alcohol consumption and avoiding its serving areas to his religious identity as a Muslim. In another example, Hakim voiced similar sentiments: "you cannot just have a Muslim who drinks and goes to club". These examples highlight the importance of Muslims' religious identity in avoiding places where alcohol is served. Hakim also highlighted that his Scottish identity does not override his religious beliefs. These last two examples particularly imply that the religious identity of Muslims has a more important role than their civic or territorial identities in shaping and forming their social integration.

Avoiding places where alcohol is served is not only limited to drinking establishments such as pubs and bars, but can also include work and school parties or events. This implies that this is the greater limit to social integration, thus making it more difficult for those who really want to integrate and maintain their religious and moral beliefs at the same time. An example illustrating this was Batool. She is a practicing Muslim woman, who highlighted the importance of alcohol in work parties (involving alcohol or night out parties) and its impact on her integration. In parallel with the examples of Jafar and Hakim, Batool stated that her religious identity as a Muslim makes her avoid such events that can make social integration in her workplace difficult.

Sanaz, a practicing Muslim woman, recounts her days as a student in a lab environment, highlighting the avoidance of social events and places where alcohol is served. In another example, Fatima, a practicing Muslim woman, expressed her willingness for

full integration but asserted that alcohol consumption was the main challenge. All these examples suggest that Muslims' religious identity, their commitment to their religion, and the dominance of drinking culture in different aspects of Scottish society can all limit practicing Muslims' social integration to a great extent and make it too difficult for those who really want to integrate into Scottish society.

The main intention behind the lack of alcohol consumption and avoiding its serving places amongst practicing Muslims was religious identity and their commitment to their religion. There were also some less-practicing participants such as Shakila and Zainab who also avoided alcohol consumption for the same reason, and though less-practicing, had a strong religious identity. The avoidance of alcohol consumption by these participants was associated more with following the religion of Islam rather than with any other intentions.

There were, however, two less-practicing participants, Hamid and Kathryn, who mentioned different reasons for their avoidance of alcohol consumption. Hamid, a first generation less-practicing Muslim man, expressed that abstinence was mainly a matter of choice rather than a religious obligation, and related to other reasons, e.g. perhaps seeing them as anti-social behavior or community pressure, rather than associating them with religiosity. In another example, Kathryn, a less-practicing Muslim woman, also asserted that her avoidance of alcohol consumption was for her just a matter of choice. The examples of Hamid and Kathryn can imply that such commitment to abstinence amongst some less-practicing participants might be due to family and/or community pressure.

Apart from seeing alcohol consumption as wrong, a fear of

being isolated from the family or the community can be another possible explanation for such commitment. These examples support previous research (Runnymede Trust, 1997), which suggested the importance of the family and community in affecting Muslims' – especially young and second-generation Muslims' – integration and identity in the UK. These examples may thus imply that even though religiosity and religious identity is significant, in general, in the avoidance of alcohol consumption among practicing Muslims, other factors such as family and community pressure can also play a part, especially among less-practicing Muslims.

The data also suggests that even though some less-practicing Muslims reported abstinence, they did not avoid being present in alcohol serving areas, and consequently did not mention alcohol consumption as being a barrier to their social integration. These participants did not mind attending places where alcohol was served, and have attended drinking establishments such as pubs and bars.

Ehsan and Hamid, for example, reported that they used to attend pubs, bars, and night clubs. Hamid stated that he used to go to pubs and bars, but some Islamophobic and racist events stopped him from continuing to do so. This was despite the fact that he already mentioned that he did not consume alcohol. Although some less-practicing Muslims attend drinking establishments, the above examples show their ambiguity about this subject. In another example, Ehsan, a less-practicing Muslim man, referred to the times that he used to go to pubs and bars and thus similarly highlighted drinking establishments. These two examples highlight the fact that despite the lack of alcohol consumption, these participants went to drinking establishment areas to gain greater social integration. This supports previous research by Hopkins

(2004) that showed that some of his respondents tended to go clubbing together in their spare time or on weekends but did not drink alcohol. These participants have a specific interpretation of the prohibition of alcohol consumption, believing that even though consumption is prohibited, being present in places where alcohol is served is not prohibited (Esposito, 2011), or is at least not considered to be as important.

Thus, the lack of alcohol consumption did not stop them from socializing and taking part in events where alcohol was served, but their participation was hindered because of Islamophobic or racist attacks. This can imply that while Muslim identity – commitment to the religion – was not a barrier to social integration for those who did not have such a strong religious identity, still other issues such as Islamophobia and racism had a larger role to play than religiosity in hindering their social integration.

5.2. Mixed Sex Interactions

The next cultural limit for Muslim social integration was mixed-sex interactions and meetings. Some interviewees mentioned that based on their Islamic rules, free mixing with opposite sexes is not permitted for Muslims. This can be traced to an interpretation of Islam that posits that after puberty, boys and girls should be separated (Hashmi, 2002; Esposito, 2011) however, there are different practices and interpretations for this separation. In some cases, interaction between men and women was practiced, but only to a limited extent. For example, Shadi, a practicing Muslim woman and a full-time undergraduate student, stated that despite feeling Scottish or British, she would not have "too much one-to-one conversation with a man" due to her religious identity. For

Shadi, "too much one-to-one interaction and conversation" with the opposite sex was considered to be unacceptable behavior.

While this allows for everyday interaction at the university and workplace, however, what could limit her social interaction is the judgement of what is perceived as "too much." "Too much" engagement here could mean a long one-to-one conversation with the opposite sex, which could make interactions with course lecturers difficult. What this example underscores is that some practicing Muslims do initiate or engage in a conversation with the opposite sex, but however, such conversation and interaction would be limited to a certain extent in order for it not to be considered as "too much" or in other words, inappropriate behavior.

Even though the boundaries of the separation or avoidance of free mixing with the opposite sex were not clear, some respondents weighed in on the boundaries of such an interaction. In some examples, the term "inappropriate manner" was used by participants to explain the extent to which a mixed sex meeting or interaction could be identified as being prohibited. For example, Fazel, who was a practicing Muslim man, stated that he avoided conversation with the opposite sex in his workplace when there an inappropriate subject is being discussed, such as sex jokes. This example implies that conversations with the opposite sex involving sexual content can be considered as an "inappropriate" by some Muslims. The examples of Shadi and Fazel could also imply that some practicing Muslims initially take part in events or places where the opposite sex are present and they may engage in a conversation with them, but the "*inappropriate"* extent or content of a conversation or interaction is what can result in the ending of such an interaction.

In another example, it was highlighted that if the extent and

content of a social event is thought to be inappropriate, some practicing Muslims may not attend such events from the onset. Illustrating this, Samad, also a practicing Muslim man, expressed that he would not feel comfortable, as a Muslim, in attending certain social events such as social evenings and dance evenings where people get drunk and dance with inappropriately-dressed women. Samad highlighted how avoiding inappropriate interactions and inappropriate meetings with the opposite sex can limit practicing Muslims' social integration in the Scottish context, wherein many social events and activities are held with alcohol consumption and a mixing of the genders. This echoes Hopkins' (2004, p. 267) research, which suggested the importance of behaving and dressing modestly for both Muslim men and women, and highlighted that "the lack of modesty present in Scottish society works to exclude young Muslim men and women".

These examples also suggest that the definition of "inappropriate manner", even amongst practicing Muslim participants was not concrete enough to provide the same boundaries for everyone, and thus could change from person to person. As illustrated above, the term "inappropriate manner" may be defined as too much conversation, sexual banter, dancing, and drinking with the opposite sex. Even though the last three examples suggest the importance of religious identity as a driving force in directing Muslims' social integration, they also highlight that Muslims' approaches to mixed-sex meetings is a matter of difference that is based on their religiosity and their interpretation of separation between men and women.

This implies that less-practicing Muslims or non-practicing Muslims would have different attitudes in meetings and interactions with the opposite sex. For example, none of the less-

practicing Muslims pointed to mixed-sex meetings as a barrier to integration. This finding is consistent with the finding of the previous discussion of being present in alcohol serving areas that suggested that some less-practicing Muslims did not mind going to such places.

6. Conclusion

Discussing the importance of Muslims' identity and experience of Islamophobia, and also that of other factors such as media and language, the data suggests that one significant barrier to integration was the *majority's* unwelcoming attitudes towards Muslims as the most unfavored minority, which were attributed to Islamophobia. Scottish social norms such as drinking alcohol and mixed-sex meetings, however, were by far the most significant issues raised by respondents, in particular the fact that so much of Scottish social life revolved around alcohol. The significance of this barrier was due to the dominant practice of alcohol consumption in Scottish social life and its prohibition in Islam.

Thus, it can be argued that the most important issue that limited Muslims' social integration was the interplay between their religious identity and the dominance of alcohol. Even the Scottish identity could not build a bridge between these two issues due to the importance of religion among practicing Muslims. It is however important to note that even though Scottish Muslims deal with different social and cultural barriers, they use different strategies to integrate into the different aspects of Scottish society by adopting alternative ways of socializing such as meeting at cafés, taking part in shared activities such as charity, interfaith, volunteer work and sports (Bagheri, 2017). In this regard, "the most common strategy

was *halal* integration, which meant fitting into society while maintaining their religious identity" (Bagheri, 2017, p. 276).

In contrast to practicing Muslims, less-practicing Muslims, due to their lesser commitment to their religion, had a more flexible approach on this issue. For example, some less-practicing Muslims used to drink alcohol and/or, crucially, did not mind attending drinking establishments, whereas practicing Muslims never drink alcohol, and usually do not tend to go to any place where alcohol is served. In other words, religious identity was the most important consideration for practicing Muslims for managing their social integration, while for the less-practicing Muslims, the issue of Islamophobia and unwelcoming attitudes were more important. This implies, interestingly, that non-practicing Muslims would have different strategies for their social integration, but this requires further research.

By examining Muslims' integrational strategies and discussing the importance of different barriers to Muslims' integration, this paper suggests that greater integration is not only an issue faced by Muslims, but it is also highly related to the efforts of other fellow citizens *and* policymakers in facilitating this process. The final point that needs to be made is a practical recommendation for policymakers who work on the greater integration and participation of Muslims in society. Due to the importance of alcohol consumption in hindering integration it is suggested that, as one of my participants pointed out, in public events where Muslims' participation is expected, that non-alcoholic venues and *halal* drinks and food be considered. Or if an alcoholic venue is inevitable, that it be mentioned that some tables with *halal* drink and food are reserved for Muslims.

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