

Role-Model Natives: Influences of Intergroup Contact on Muslim Perceptions of Right-wing Populism

Yahya Barry

Abstract: Right-wing populism has risen from the periphery to govern centre politics. According to some scholars, the status quo is an apocalyptic ultimatum to Muslims in Europe; Is it going to be an Islamised Europe or Europeanised Islam? But with Muslim voices almost absent from the literature, this article critically addresses such tropes by questioning the extent to which such matters relate to the everyday lived contingencies of Muslims in Europe and the relationships they establish in society. By giving Muslims a voice, they tell us not only what is really affecting them, but also how they relate with significant 'others' in society as they negotiate their senses of belonging and citizenship. Scholarship has highlighted role models as important to minority communities or disadvantaged groups because they provide a template of behaviours for achievement, success and social acceptance. How do Muslim youth who come into significant contact with non-Muslim mentors through educational and vocational trajectories relate to them? This study contributes to the outlined literatures with a small-scale study of second-generation and convert Muslim responses to Right-wing Populism in Edinburgh, Copenhagen, and Malmo. Through narrative analysis, the article focuses on the theme of 'role-model natives', unravelling how intergroup contact and relationships influence Muslim perceptions of right-wing populism.

Keywords: Islam, Muslims, Right-wing populism, Citizenship, Role models, Europe, Integration

Overview

The spectre of the rising crescent of Islam in Europe/the West is undoubtedly going to cause some reaction. The flurry of recent literature on Right-wing Populism has focused on structural effects/consequences, such as agenda-setting policies (Minkenberg 2017), cross-party influence and impact on national electoral systems (Akkerman 2017; Mudde 2017). Research studying responses to Right-wing Populism has followed this structural focus, outlining the adaptations of political parties within the electoral systems, the 'new alliances' forged with mainstream governing parties

Yahya is a Senior Visiting Researcher at CAS with research interests in Black African Diasporas, Islamophobia, Right-wing Populism & Christian-Muslim Relations in West Africa. Dr. Barry is a certified Minister of Religion (BA Islamic Theology, Madinah 2009) and served as Imam of Edinburgh Central Mosque. He studied Religion in Peace & Conflict (MA, Uppsala, 2014) and the Religious Roots of Europe (MA, Copenhagen, 2013). His PhD (Edinburgh, 2019) researched Muslim responses to Right-wing Populism in the UK and Scandinavia. He is consulted by the BBC Religion & Ethics board from 2016 to present and is a regular contributor to BBC Scotland's Sunday Morning With programme. He is the founding director of Olive Tree CIC.

and how the political discourse in specific national contexts has reacted (Art 2017; Mudde 2017; van Donselaar 2016).

No matter to what extent the literature has attributed the tectonic changes of the political landscape to structural forces, one very clear matter is that such groups and networks at their embryonic phases were responding to the everyday concerns of people at the microsocial level (Arzheimer 2017; Goodwin 2011). The article asks: are these 'concerns' and the apocalyptic scripts foretelling the end of Islam or Europe shared by people going about their normal lives, and especially the targets of anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia, or is this script one that is being 'written by established scholars and commentators' (Zuquete 2017, 117)? Do these scripts reflect a reality or are they mere dramatised fantasies conceived in certain circles only to disappear when another apocalypse appears? Do they have any significance to the lives of Muslims?

With its focus on macro-structural issues, the literature has ignored the micro-level. A literature review of scholarship studying the consequences of and responses to right-wing populism returned no results as far as Muslims are concerned. The literature on Islamophobia is relatively more developed (Allen 2014; Bleich 2011; Garner & Selod 2015; Meer 2014). As yet, however, it has focused on arguing for the recognition of Islamophobia as a distinct 'discriminatory category' (Meer & Modood 2010; 2012), or on specific aspects such as identity politics and gender (Elshayyal 2018) or statistics, institutions, and organisations are the empirical and analytical focus (Meer 2014; Sheridan 2006).

Is academia complicit in the marginalisation of Muslim voices in the right-wing populist debate? If we are to come closer to understanding intergroup dynamics and conflict, we must look at the voices of people and communities at the microsocial level. With a complex globalised world, modes of communication have opened possibilities for individuals and minority groups to exercise their social agencies and influence global human discourse. This interest in the individual, microsocial level is tallied with methodological choices favouring a qualitative, small-scale, interpretive approach.

Research Outline and Method

Conscious of the complexity of the topic and individual subjectivity, I did not assume *a priori* that the apocalyptic scripts featured in the everyday contingencies of the study's participants. I consequently articulated my study in terms of looking at 'change' and its causes among Muslims in Europe. I informed the participants that I was interested in studying the influence of right-wing populism; however, the main topic of engagement was change. Framing the study in this way opened the space for

them to reflect on the changes within their senses of identity and allowed them to express these in narrative form. This enabled me to look at how relevant right-wing populism was in their everyday lived lives by looking at when, where, how, and why it featured in their narratives – if it did.

As this was an exploratory study looking at a phenomenon spreading across Europe, there was rationale for a multi-site comparative approach. I found the ‘Most Similar Systems Design – MSSD’ (Anckar 2008) useful in delineating the study’s locations. Literature documenting tensions/contestations of public space between Muslims and the non-Muslims who view themselves as ‘indigenous’ of certain European cities (Eade 1996; Mandel 1996; Nordin 2005; Schmidt 2011) outlined Copenhagen and Malmo as fitting into an MSSD bracket in terms of size, economy, and the Muslim demographic presence. With the literature indicating an active and relatively strong current for right-wing populism in Scandinavia, it was rational to compare the region with another context where right-wing populism is more temperate. Here, Edinburgh, with scholarship highlighting its ‘benign’ reception of Muslims (Bonino 2017) emerged as a good fit in terms of MSSD.

To enable detailed interpretative analysis,¹ it was crucial to ensure that the small-scale nature of the study tally with a small number of contrasts so that what participants share is given due analytical consideration. I used purposive sampling ‘where participants are selected on the basis of having a significant relation to the research topic’ reflectively without necessarily being representative of the population of interest (see Seale 2013, 237). The focus fell on second-generation Muslims and converts. A theoretical justification exists for this selection. Muslims born and/or raised in Europe are more likely to have a stake in belonging than the first generation who had/have a ‘myth of return’ (Anwar 1979; Jeffery 1976). Due to this greater stake of the second generation, their responses to right-wing populism are likely to be more pronounced. Another group of Muslims sharing this present/conscious stakeholder status are the converts to Islam.

The empirical material focuses on a subset of 28 participants from a total 45 who participated in Edinburgh, Copenhagen, and Malmo. The fieldwork took a period of thirteen months through March 2017 with follow-up interviews terminating in April 2018. Having framed my study as one looking at when, where, and how right-wing populism features in the everyday lives of my participants without assuming it *a priori*, the data is presented to foreground the factors they highlighted as being important. Two key narratives emerged from the two cohorts. One of the prominent narratives

1 One way which scholars using qualitative methods strive towards validity is through detailing, high-quality analyses and ‘thick descriptions’ (see Chamberlayne *et al.* 2000: 21 and Brink 1993: 238)

in the accounts of the second-generation participants is the ‘growing-up story’ of being Muslim. Within these narratives of growing up, the theme of ‘role-model natives’ emerges whereby Muslim youth who come into significant contact with non-Muslim mentors through educational and vocational trajectories relate to them. The next section in the article presents and analyses these narratives before discussing the findings and concluding.

Conflicted Upbringings and Role-Model Natives

Conflict, in its multitude of forms, was one of the overarching themes of the participants’ narratives of growing up. The sources, provocateurs, and reasons behind the conflicts ranged: from disagreements with parents and family to run-ins with authority figures at school; and from crises in self-identity to contesting definitions about what it meant to be Muslim. The conflicts exposed the participants to new milieu and brought about profound crises which had to be resolved. One of the major challenges encountered by the young participants was the conflict some had with significant others – parents and family members particularly. For some, this conflict continues. Being a teenager brought about its fair share of adversities. These problems and issues were not necessarily connected to their sense of Muslimness and being Muslim. Beyond ‘just being a teenager’, however, Islam featured in these conflicts, albeit in different ways. For Mustafa – whose narrative I will dwell on for some time – it almost seemed as though Islam was momentarily suspended. He knew that the religion exhorted kindness to parents, but he was a teenager.

I remember... the Muslims in the mosque always taught me that you must be good to your mother, you must... never say anything bad to her, even Uff [...] It stuck in my head you know. So at puberty, it changed in my body. I became more angry more easily. I had mood swings, I had problems, I didn’t even know who it was. So, in my family [...] I started to feel more, you know, strange.
(Mustafa, unemployed, early-20s, Malmo, Turkish background)

This excerpt resonates with scholarship on Muslim identity and youth: Islam is not necessarily the default mode to which Muslim conduct is set (Bonino 2017; Hopkins 2007; Jeldtoft 2012; Meer 2010; Otterbeck 2012; Schmidt 2004). Muslims, like others, choose when to switch religion (Islam) on and off. If this is the case, their responses to rhetoric which targets their religion – right-wing populism, as such – could be contingent upon this factor.

Mustafa’s participation provided some interesting insights along these lines. He grew up in Rosengård, a renowned tough area with a segregated migrant-background population. Mustafa commenced his schooling in the area, but when he started getting into trouble, his mother made the decision to pull him out and send him to a city-centre school. Here, Mustafa stood out, in terms of his ethnicity at first, and

then his conduct. He had a role to act out – ‘the tough kid from Rosengard’. Despite Islam’s appeal to him as a youngster, it was neither the religion in and of itself nor its adherents that Mustafa would turn to for help in resolving his school crisis.

Mustafa: I had a very great teacher [...] He had been in the military, he was a bodybuilder, and he was very cool, and he was very motivational as a person.

Yahya: Right! And he was a Swedish native?

Mustafa: Yea, he was Swedish native. He helped me and he was helping another guy I was with too, he was also from another background, so we really didn’t fit in the class [...]

Yahya: OK, was that after the tough guy was broken down?

Mustafa: Yea [...] we really clicked with him because we’re also into training and martial arts... he started to help us weightlifting, gave us tips on what to eat. He became like a role model [...]

Yahya: You were going through these changes in puberty. So when would you say you started to become more stable?

Mustafa: I think it was ... when I got this teacher at the end in the seventh, eighth grade, that’s where I felt like it was very stable [...] I thought, all these years, he helped me now to get a more stronger identity you know, so we started believing in ourselves.

Mustafa’s narrative bears the hallmarks of resisting the stigma of being ‘the dumb kid from Rosengard’ who could not fit in. He had to prove his critics wrong. Erving Goffman made a piercing analysis of segregated environments as graveyards where the marginalised live until they die their social deaths. An individual unable to ‘sustain’ one of their social roles is effectively ‘losing one of his social lives and is about to die one of the deaths that are possible for him’ (Goffman 1952, 451–63). Mustafa’s narrative was one of a young man who was resisting this social death. What happened to Islam, however? When it did feature in his narrative, it seemed to be in the periphery, and at times, it was a result of my probing.

Mustafa: There is actually one change that I noticed when I was a kid like 8 or 9 years old. I went to the mosque, some of my friends went there and [...] we had people that were like role models. They were raising us [...] I felt there was something that was good, I had something that appealed to me [...] It continued towards 10, 11, 12. But then I started to [see]... it interfered much with my school.

Yahya: It interfered?

Mustafa: Yea. I had these ideas about how a Muslim should be. But when I went to school, you know, my friends were also Muslim. But I saw [...] they were talking with girls [...] go[ing] out and party[ing] [...] They wanted to do like what the society tells them to do [...] I can say I felt a little bit confused [...]

Yahya: Was there any point in the lectures in [the mosque] that would be, let's say, advice to someone like you on how to live Islam in a realistic way in school? So that it might clear up some of the conflict you had?

Mustafa's mosque mentors 'did not go to school [anymore], they had jobs and started families.' Despite some being born and raised in Sweden, and therefore expected to be able to relate to Mustafa's predicament, guidance did not come from them in this matter. To his advantage, he had recourse to another role model – his schoolteacher. When I remarked to him 'it seems as though you almost Islamised his influence', Mustafa laughed, saying 'yes' twice. At this point, I bring into focus some of the theoretical frameworks which inform my study.

Intergroup Contact Theoretical Framework

In studying the intricate processes involved when terms like citizenship, integration, and Islamophobia are evoked, I recognise that I am ultimately dealing with cognitive definitions and redefinitions of social groups and social identity (Turner 2010; Tajfel 2010). The theories that have emanated from this field of study and from cross-cultural research (Wetherell 2010) are therefore significant to this study. I will highlight some of this research and briefly discuss how it illuminates my study.

Social grouping occurs when individuals perceive themselves as belonging to the same social category (Andersson 2006; Risse 2001); they share 'a collective perception of their own social unity' (Turner 2010, 15). This 'minimal categorisation' is powerful enough to induce effects such as intergroup discrimination and competition (Jahoda 1978; Whiting 1968; Vaughan 1978 cited in Wetherell 2010). Substantial empirical studies have also been conducted within the field of social psychology to show the complex nature of social group relations and interactions (Gaffié 1992; Kelman 1958; Sampson 1991; Bagozzi & Lee 2002; Fein et al. 2007). Although this study is not located within social psychology, some of the insights do benefit us in terms of theory development and data analysis.

The dynamics of intergroup behaviour (Brown and Ross 2010) comprise a range of interesting processes and interactions which may well apply in studying Muslim responses to right-wing populism. And from this comes the perspective that power relations and contestations between groups create relationships of domination and subordination (Deschamps 2010, 88–91). These produce perceptions of superiority and inferiority (Brown and Ross 2010) where certain battles for acceptance are fought. And within these battles, certain tactics are deployed by group members, what Brown & Ross (2010, 170) termed 'social creativity as a response to threat'. Here, group members respond to perceptions of threat or superiority by altering the 'attachment' they place on certain values and qualities.

It would be interesting to see if, how and when my study's participants engage in these 'social creative responses' – both as individuals and group members self-identifying with the Muslim community (potentially). Intergroup contact theory (Allport 1954, Pettigrew 2007, Zajonc 1968) is certainly helpful here in explaining how Mustafa came to Islamise his native Swedish teacher's influence to the point he became a source of guidance over and against his Rosengard Muslim elders. Simply put, increased contact enhances liking and relatability. Had Mustafa remained schooled in Rosengard, such a process would, most probably, not have taken place.

I looked up to this guy because even when he was our age, he was always taking care of his body [...] and always training [...] So I felt from another point of view that OK, you can also be cool and you don't have to drink, you don't have to party because he didn't do it. He always said, like: when I was a kid, I didn't go out and do that, and I didn't go party 'cos I had tournaments [...] [He] couldn't drink and then next day, he wouldn't sober up. He gave us like that focus [...] saying: you should stick with the right people around you that can help you to focus on your goals.

On his own admission, Mustafa has always been motivated by a drive to 'prove people wrong'. He excelled in school to show his classmates that the 'dumb kid from Rosengard can fit in'. The help he received from his mentor(s) at school was crucial to his fitting in, and this has led him to securely self-identify as Swedish more so than Turkish. By comparison to his Rosengard peers, Mustafa demonstrated a secure sense of belonging to Sweden. The effect of his education outside 'the ghetto' had been profound.

There are people born in Sweden, but they couldn't even speak like good Swedish [...] Maybe they even use like sign language [...] I was hanging with kids in Rosengard, and they were a little bit embarrassed to call themselves Swedish people. They always said: I'm Arabic, I'm Turkish, I'm Albanian [...] proud! If you said you were from Sweden, you would like get, like, 'geek' or something. Now when you ask me, I say I feel more Swedish because I have more Swedish values. I don't know if it's correct to say but, I maybe have more Swedish values than Turkish.

We saw in Mustafa's case, when Islam was not available, or, when it was partially available, role models played an important role in the process of identity production. This factor appeared in the other participants' growing-up experiences, albeit in different ways, causing quite different outcomes. The literature places role model² as a concept within social learning theory (Kemper 1968 cited in Brown 2012).

2 Kemper (1968, 33) defined a role model as someone who 'possesses skills and displays techniques which the actor lacks...and from whom, by observation and comparison with his own performance, the actor can learn' (cited in Brown 2012, 306).

Scholarship has highlighted role models as important to minority communities or disadvantaged groups because they provide a template of behaviours for achievement because they are perceived as embodying success (Basit 1996; Brown 2012; Dagkas *et al.* 2011; Jouili 2013; Lockwood 2006). The body element is certainly key; and while some research has documented a positive correlation (e.g. Lockwood (2006) finding gender as a determining factor for the positive impact of role models for female students), it has been contested. Brown's (2012) study of African American male teachers provided compelling insights challenging what he outlined as:

a discursively sealed construct, one theorised solely as the father figure, mentor, and role model for the at-risk and in-crisis Black male student. What is striking about this discourse is that Black men were presumed – by default – to possess the pedagogies needed to fulfil these roles. The roles, capacities, pedagogies, and expectations of Black male teachers were, therefore, set in place before they ever entered the classroom (Brown 2012, 307).

The association between 'black male bodies' and pedagogy fed into cultural narratives which fetishise the black male body by reducing (essentialising) its performance 'through explicit and subtle discourses of deviance and difference' (Brown 2012, 308). The frenzied advocacy of the US Department of Education, political organisations, activists, researchers, and even Oprah Winfrey to increase African American male teachers from the 1990s to 2010 missed one key detail: 'the practice of teaching the Black boy is pedagogical, and not just an outcome of their race and gender' (Brown 2012, 312). While there exists literature shedding light on the importance of Muslim role models for: state-civil society relations (Jouili 2013, 71), upward social mobility (Basit 1996, 234) and inclusive education (Dagkas *et al.* 2011, 236), I was not too convinced by their uncritical application of the term 'Muslim role model'.

Was Islam being reified into Muslim bodies? I found it interesting to see if the question of body compellingly articulated by Brown (2012) tallied with some of my findings. African American males were constructed – by the sociological literature – as embodying 'special cultural knowledge and understanding that would make them ideal role models for African American male students (Brown 2012, 306). How about Muslim young men and women, did they need Muslim male and female bodies?

In the absence of Muslim role models, Mustafa Islamised his non-Muslim Swedish teacher's influence to the point he became a Muslim role model. I highlight that this occurred in the context of schooling in a non-segregated area. Had the same teacher worked in the Rosengard School, could he have played a similar role? Probably. But we must recognise that Mustafa's move to the city-centre school exposed him to a milieu where he was challenged to confront his otherness – something his Rosengard friends did not have to do. They found it less problematic to 'proudly' self-identify

as ‘Arab, Albanian or Turkish’ and difficult to see themselves as Swedish. Mustafa benefited from a supportive relationship in this crucial transition period of his life. He was able to survive the crisis and even subvert the stigma by showing he could fit in and achieve his goals. Opposite to this experience of supportive teacher-role models was Riem’s case.

When I was in third or fourth grade, we had a parent-teacher meeting about me [...] after gym class to [not] shower with the rest of the kids, because – you know – Muslim rules and stuff [laughs]. I remember the teacher [...] at the end [...] [saying] [...] ‘ok, fine.’ The next time we had gym [...] she said [mimicking derogatory tone] ‘Oh! Riem [...] it’s not going to be possible. You have to shower with the [others].’ I still remember [emotive tone] ... what I was wearing, where I was, everything, because [...] I felt like someone slapped me twice [...] Authorities were like [...] [gestures with hand up]: you can’t say nothing.

(Riem, mid-20s, Teacher, Copenhagen, Syrian background)

This negative experience had a profound impact on Riem’s trust in authority figures, both within the school/academic context and out-with. She lamented the ‘injustices’ she has encountered as a teacher working within the Danish education system and narrated the negative experiences of some Muslim colleagues.³ Her voice echoed the two other Muslim teachers I met – Salim (Malmo) and Momina (London) in expressing serious concern for the wellbeing of Muslim students/youth educated in such institutions.

I’m really scared for the next generation and their future in this country because right now, they have this anti-radicalisation programme and it’s really targeted towards children in elementary schools. So you have teachers who are told to focus: [...] do you see anything radicalised about this kid [mimics serious tone in sarcasm]? You have stories about a kid [...] playing with a banana as a gun [...] they were afraid he was going to be radicalised [...] If they say anything about Israel or Palestine, they’re going to be radicalised! You’re not allowed to be a kid anymore, and that’s really scary. (Riem)

When I compared Riem’s responses to right-wing populism with Mustafa’s, I could see a difference in the focal points of their narratives. Mustafa’s immediate focus is on the grassroots. He talked about how ‘normal people’ could become afraid of peoples and cultures they had not encountered. This led to him differentiating between racism and xenophobia. For this reason, he was able to come to the conclusion that,

3 ‘I have friends who experience that [...] They work in a school with a high Muslim population [...] One of them went to pray in the same place as the students prayed and she got told: ‘Oh! You cannot pray with them because people will think you’re pressing them to pray [irritated tone] [...] It [became] a case.’ (Riem)

like crime in society, xenophobia will always be around. It is not something of major concern to him.⁴ His role model teachers yet again significantly contributed to his reaching this conclusion.

Yahya: Can I ask, are you basing this on the fact that you've mixed with Swedish people and [...] not everyone is acting along this ideology?

Mustafa: It was something that stuck in my head from my teacher in school [...] she said that during her grandmother's years in Sweden [...] xenophobia was bigger because there wasn't that many people from other backgrounds. But when they started to mix up, it became more and more accepted. And, she said that it's mostly because of fear of the unknown.

Riem's response on the other hand focused on the political (macrosocial) level. The distinction she made essentially categorised Danish society into 'two spheres' – the general population as one, and the politicians and media as the second. Her focus on the power wielded by the latter group and its impact on people's – especially Muslim youths' – everyday lived experiences became a major concern for her.

I see it like [...] two different spheres [gestures with hands]. You have all the people in Denmark who go to school, work [...] we all live in harmony. Then you have the politicians and media! They live in their own little world [...] where all the Muslims are out to get them, and everything is bad [...] I see a really, really scary development in Danish politics [...] Before, we only had Pia Kjaersgaard.⁵ It was [only] the Danish FolkeParti who had these really outrageous thoughts [...] about Muslims. Now, it's every other party as well [...] The only politician we know who stands for what they feel is Pia Kjaersgaard! Everyone else [...] one day they believe this and the [next] day, they believe something else because they're only out for the votes [...] You voted for them [...] then when they got elected, they totally turned on you [laughs]. (Riem)

Had Riem benefitted from supportive role-model teachers in school, would her responses have been different? Would she have expressed similar views to Mustafa? What her narrative does show is her clash with 'authority' stimulated relatively more insecure responses to right-wing populism when compared with Mustafa's trusting relationships with his role-model teachers. Furthermore, her position as a teacher/mentor to Muslim youths has given her clear insights into the substantial nature of the challenges that face them from a number of institutional levels: academic, political,

4 'I haven't really cared about the[m], as I said I didn't really see them as a threat, but I know there will always be stupid people who attack people, you will always see that. I don't think you can eliminate it completely, it's like saying we want a country that has no crime whatsoever. We will always have crime, you can decrease it, but you can never eliminate it.' (Mustafa)

5 The founder and ex-leader of the Right-wing populist Danish People's Party (FolkeParti).

social, and the media. She shared this position with the other teachers. They all voiced the serious concerns they have for the welfare of Muslim youth in the circumstances.

When I look at the stories of the participants, with role models in mind, I could not help but see its huge importance. I saw this as necessary to convey, even if the space does not allow for in-depth analysis of each narrative. Farid was born and raised in Copenhagen, where he currently resides. By the age of fourteen, he had become deeply involved in the Copenhagen gang scene. Farid narrated how Muslim youth who could not find role models growing up in Copenhagen went away from 'education', resorting to alternative resources like hip-hop and rap culture or, even, to more destructive resources such as gang culture and street violence. It resonated with some aspects of what Brown (2012) described when African American youth living in matrifocal homes would 'seek validation of their manhood through distorted constructions of masculinity from peers and other African American men outside the home' (Brown 2012, 303).

MTV [...] the different channels, these gangster movies [...] when they showed that to us, that was what we could relate to because we had always problem with the cops, and there was a racial problem. (Farid, mid-20s, Copenhagen, Iraqi-Iranian background)

The ability to reconcile aspects of Islam with everyday life featured as an important factor in the participants' narratives. Within the growing-up narratives of the participants, there was an observation that at certain points, they encountered scenarios and moments where Islam – in their perception – either limited them or was limited in what it could offer in terms of resources. They were conflicted between Islam and their daily lived realities. We see that Mustafa's ability to reconcile the elements of his Muslim identity with everyday life gave him a sense of 'stability' in the midst of conflict. This translated into secure identification which led to fitting in. This in turn enabled him to relate with 'Swedish values' as he responded to right-wing populism.

Reconciling Islam with Everyday Life

Some of the participants, like Sahra, faced considerable difficulty in reconciling Islam with the lived reality of youth. This section compares their narratives to shed further light on this issue. Sahra is a Danish-Somali woman in her mid-twenties. She is a trainee social worker in Copenhagen. She was born in Somalia but came with her family to Denmark at kindergarten age. She had a lot of things going on – on her own admission – as she grew up in her new home: she was 'fat', the only Black Muslim in a white-Danish school. She had an absent father figure and a mother whose struggle to raise a lot of children under one roof compromised her ability to explain Islam beyond a redundant simplistic framework.

I noticed when I was in school, I was this kind of person, and when I came home to the society I was living in, I was another kind of person... OK, should I be more Danish, or should I be more Muslim Somali? [It] was like an identity crisis for me...At this point, I'm like 16...I had Hijab on...I was like OK, I don't want to have this on...I just want to be myself because I felt being yourself would be more Danish, like be more the people around you...I started to not go with my Hijab...and I was a bit rebellious with my mother...went partying all that...I thought that was the life for me. (Sahra)

Considerable research has shown that when young Muslims are able to coherently 'live' their 'Islams' in their everyday lives, they become more secure about themselves, their relationships and their citizenships; and this security manifests when their claims of belonging are questioned (Bonino 2017; Elshayyal 2018; Finlay et al. 2017; Hopkins 2018; Jeldtoft 2012; Otterbeck 2010; Schmidt 2011). We see this with Mustafa during his schooling. Sahra was initially unable to attain this. She lacked relatable role models at school and parental support at home. She rebelled against her Islamic upbringing in a bid to be 'more Danish'. This, according to her, only accentuated her non-Danishness.

Sahra: When I was 20, I start to think about the creation around me, and I started to think: the more I was trying to be this, the more I feel like I was betraying myself with sins. So I was like, I can never be like them [...]

Yahya: The Danish?

Sahra: Yea, the Danish people. I could never be like them because I was believing in the creation and how, I was like, how can these people not have a religion in any kind of way like? It's all about your desires, desires, desires. So I was thinking a lot, and I stopped partying...I noticed like many of my Danish friends at that time cut me off.

A gradual return to Islam took place for Sahra. What deserves highlighting is that it would take a reconciliation between her new-found practice of Islam with her everyday life for Sahra to become secure about herself, her relationships, her citizenship, and her belonging to Danish society. This security manifested itself in her responses to right-wing populism. Having seen her in a counter-demonstration against PEGIDA, I directly asked:

Yahya: So how do you see these far-right groups [...] like this PEGIDA-Denmark, how do you see them, do you feel affected by them? Do you feel threatened by them?

Sahra: I don't feel threatened. Yea, I don't feel that, and I just feel more sorry for a person. I feel [that] because I've been there [...] I don't have all knowledge like now, but [...] I've been to a place where I was living in my own zone [...] it's all about me, and my desires and how I see things before I became more like:

ok, let me learn things, other cultures, let me learn about how these people are seeing me [...] I just feel sorry about that: the people don't go and seek knowledge, why [do] you stand for this kind of propaganda, about Muslims [...] I can feel sorry for you that you're following this kind of way. You can like develop yourself for your own sake, and for your children's sake, because you're just creating a hate, and hate [...] hurts more than anything else.

This ability to reconcile Islam with one's everyday lived reality appears to be a crucial factor in the participants' staking claims to belonging. I was able to make this observation when comparing Mustafa and Sahra's narratives to Dwayne and Tariq – whose narratives I briefly share next. I found in their case that some participants' responses to right-wing populism were framed within discourses of absent stakeholderhood, that is, in terms of inactive citizenship and belonging (i.e., we're not too bothered by right-wing populism, but we're also not too interested in taking active part in society). Dwayne and Tariq, like Mustafa and Sahra, faced the dilemma of being Muslim, yet growing up in Europe. Unlike them, however, they were yet to reconcile their versions of Islam and their daily lived realities.

Dwayne, like Sahra also went through life-changing experiences in moving from one context to another during childhood. He likewise experienced conflict with his parents around Islam. Dwayne was, however, a convert and the transitions in his life were many. Born and raised in Hackney, he had to move to the Caribbean when he was two to live with his grandparents while his mother finished her university degree. Growing up in an extended family with limited socio-economic resources enabled Dwayne to appreciate family values and 'built' his character. Moving back to the UK to live with his mother at the age of twelve brought its fair share of change, and later on, conflict, as he went into his teens. Although encountering racism was a part of his growing-up experiences, Dwayne shared (performed) a narrative of positivity and strong-mindedness which enabled him to pull through –whether that be during school or later on when he reached seventeen and found himself in the 'hostel system'. He had moved out of his mother's house by this time and it coincided with his conversion to orthodox Islam having been raised by his mother as an adherent of the Nation of Islam.

Dwayne found it hard to find balance and stability in his life after converting to Islam at sixteen. His impressionability together with the bad company he was around while growing up in Hackney stifled his faith. He needed a complete 'fresh start', and this is what Malmo offered. This time round, he was determined to 'hold fast' to his religion; the priority lay in 'safeguarding' it. His narrative was a performance of redemption, and the identity he produced in his participation emphasised a distinct conservatism outlined by Geoffroy (2004) as one of the 'religious positions' in response to modernity. Dwayne's prioritisation precluded the 'reconciliation'

between his practice of Islam and his lived everyday reality in Malmö. For him, it was the same whether right-wing politics took hold of Sweden or not because it did not matter much. He was on a mission to make his 'Hijrah'. This constituted a different kind of response to right-wing populism – one rooted in an unwillingness or inability to reconcile Islam with everyday life in Europe.

Yahya: Is there any direction that these changes are going towards? [...] You've seen changes in yourself, in your thinking as an adult, what about in terms of [...] politics or economics or how society in Sweden is changing? Do you pick up on any of these?

Dwayne: Yea, it's come lately now that Romania has joined the EU, obviously now we see a lot of Romanians on the street that are begging or busking [...] But for me realistically that doesn't really [...] affect me even in the politics [...] I don't really care about those stuff to tell you the truth cos I know what I need to do for myself personally and where I'm going and where I want to go, so what, I mean [...] It's not permissible for a Muslim to live in a non-Islamic country whether it be having children, because verily even in the way I was thinking about it, obviously, safety is an important issue, even to the whole of mankind. I don't think there's no one individual that would say: I'm not worried about safety, everyone's worried about safety, and in the aspect of safety, at the head of safety is safeguarding my religion. (Dwayne, late-20s, personal assistant, Malmö, Afro-Caribbean background)

Tariq was raised in the deprived Saughton area in Edinburgh. One of the earliest memories he invokes in his narrative is being told that everyone around him was a 'junkie'. It was a powerful briefing because it pretty much shaped his outlook and social relations in that crucial, formative stage of his life. Before religion would feature as a resource for identity construction, Tariq's narrative told a story of racialised gender roles and social relations. He was not allowed to play with the other 'white boys' even though he wanted to. And when those white boys looked at his sisters, he was given instructions to beat them up.

To reinforce these racialised social relations, Tariq was taught that the values being instilled in him were his 'culture'. At this point, a perceivable syncretisation of Islam with cultural norms featured in Tariq's narrative. This amalgam became a resource for identity production albeit in an Islamic dressing: negotiations around gender – masculinity in particular – occurred within an Islamified framework. Tariq was consequently raised with the values of 'izzah, sharaf and ghirah' (pride, respect and protective jealousy) epitomised as 'Muslim' values.

I was given the impression that my family were saved. Mum was proper. Dad was proper [...] uncles were proper. I had to be proper: '[Tariq], don't talk to girls!' [serious voice] Haram! OK I won't talk to girls. And then at 17, I see

my mum talking to a guy [...] so what the fuck is going on here? [...] I was sugar-coated, moulded, covered [...] and almost programmed [...] Don't talk to girls! OK. Don't fight your family. OK [...] Go beat up that boy who looked at your sister! OK. That's what it was right. Up until I was 17. (Tariq, mid-20s, Security officer, Edinburgh, Moroccan-Tunisian background)

Tariq shared with Dwayne this absent-stakeholder narrative in terms of his sense of belonging and social participation. Like Mustafa, Sahra, and Dwayne, Tariq's Islam was also conflicted in his growing up, and he continues to struggle with reconciling it with his everyday life. Exposure to discrimination as a part and parcel of growing up in Saughton and Stenhouse resulted in an unreconciled sense of identity, especially in the absence of role models. We saw something of an 'us versus them' narrative when he spoke about his early childhood experiences such as in him not being allowed to play with the other children, and how he saw them as 'white boys'. Tariq's narrative was extensive. His conflicted Islam stemmed from the upbringing he received at home with his family. It suffices here to summarise the relevant parts of his narrative as it pertained to the topic of reconciling Islam with everyday life.

Discussion

The participants' narratives have shown that they exercise individual agency in choosing when to switch Islam on and off. Their perceptions of anti-Islam discourses are therefore likely to correlate with this: that is, neither Islam nor right-wing populism determined the production of narrative identities definitively. I was interested in studying the participants' narratives around their images of self and constructions of identity when – at some point in their lives – Islam was not necessarily an active agent or resource. We saw that the participants used other resources available to them in order to construct their identities and configure images of who they saw as some of the participants; and on the other hand, we saw how the absence of role models made challenges faced more insurmountable.

We saw in Mustafa's case how contact with a non-Muslim role model became a defining episode in his identification. The combined factors of a secure sense of belonging and identity stemming from positive relations (contact) with indigenous Swedish people produced highly secure responses to right-wing populism. Tariq's narrative showed that although a segregated upbringing exposed him to experiences of discrimination and prejudice, he did not produce his narrative identities as a response to right-wing populism. Rather, they appeared to be resisting the stigma of being Muslim (Bonino 2017).

Both Sahra and Tariq, like Mustafa faced a crisis in reconciling aspects of Islam with everyday life at school and in Danish and Scottish society respectively. Unlike Mustafa

though, they did not narrate the presence of a role model who could help them with this. When the clash with their parents came, they both took on the Danish/Scottish youth party lifestyle as a resource for producing identity. This also served a means of rebellion against their parents' Muslim background.

Referring to the theoretical frameworks, the explanatory model best suited to explaining and accounting for the above outlined empirical manifestations is intergroup relations and social identity theory. Sahra attached value to 'knowledge' and it became a means for her reconciling her Islam with her left-wing activism; Mustafa recognised the Islamic values inherent in Swedishness. These could be viewed from the theoretical perspectives of 'social creativity as a response to threat' (Brown & Ross 2010, 170), or tactics-strategies (de Certeau 1984) in response to perceptions of threat/superiority by altering attachment placed on certain values and qualities (Cairns 2010). Intergroup contact theory (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 2007) has also provided a useful framework to explain the 'in/exposure leading to non/liking' (Pettigrew 2007, 188) narratives shared by Mustafa, Sahra, and Tariq.

When comparing the participants' responses to the literature on intergroup conflict and other minority (stigmatised) groups, I saw a number of similar coping measures manifest in the narratives. The suppressed 'dissident identities' of the first generation (Walter et. al. 2002) resurfacing in the second generation as a 'rediscovery of cultural roots' (Bradley 2006, 1193) was something which Sahra's narrative expressed. The 'downplaying' of Irish identity (Ullah 1985) and 'avoidance' as a coping strategy for members of the African American community (Utsey et. al. 2000) are two responses which avoid confronting the source of prejudice/discrimination. This could be seen in Dwayne and Tariq's responses. For both, the apparent difficulty of reconciling Islam with everyday life appeared to inhibit their claims of collective belonging. Their responses to right-wing populism were framed in terms of an absent stakeholdership, that is, not being too bothered, while disengaging from civic participation.

Growing up Muslim, unfortunately, entailed growing up with conflict, often involving family, friends and identities. Regarding how this theme related to Muslim responses to right-wing populism, it was observed that when such conflict is resolved through the reconciliation between Islam and other aspects of identity such as ethnicity, nationality, and gender, it tended to produce secure responses. The presence or absence of role models was a significant factor in this process of reconciliation. It may have been expected that Islam would be an inhibiting factor stimulating more defensive responses. The participants, however, reconfigured Islam in ways which complemented active civic participation in their local and national contexts. Rather than become inhibiting, Islam provided a basis for exploring, considering, and – where necessary – countering narratives and discourses of exclusion. We saw this particularly in the cases of Sahra and Mustafa.

Conclusion

This article looked at the growing-up narratives of second-generation and convert Muslims. It has provided empirical examples showing a range of factors (migration, socio-economic, and individual) producing distinct perspectives and experiences which the participants used in narrating their identities. Three major factors were found to be challenging to the participants in their growing-up experiences: (1) segregation, (2) lack of role models and (3) the inability to reconcile Islam with everyday life. While each of these factors could be variably linked to the participants' perceptions of and responses to right-wing populism, being Muslim in and of itself does not appear to determine the nature of these responses.

The article focused on Muslim responses to Right-wing Populism from the prism of intergroup relations between Muslim youth and 'role-model natives'. This small-scale, explorative-comparative study of Muslim voices in Edinburgh, Copenhagen, and Malmo has shown that although the participants exhibited a range of 'social creative responses', these were in response to stigmatisation primarily. The data showed no 'reactive' Muslim identity emerging as a response to right-wing populism. The participants perceived other factors as having a far greater impact on their everyday lives and growing-up experiences than right-wing populism.

We saw in Mustafa's case how contact with a non-Muslim role model became a defining episode in his identification. The combined factors of a secure sense of belonging and identity stemming from positive relations (contact) with indigenous Swedish people produced highly secure responses to right-wing populism.

Segregation inhibited meaningful intergroup contact. This was vividly portrayed in Mustafa's narrative. His secure responses to right-wing populism, his ability to discern between racist ideology and xenophobia, and positive self-identification with Sweden as his country were a product of the intergroup contact outside Rosengard (Malmo). I cannot, however, conclude that a correlation exists between segregation, contact, and the nature of responses to right-wing populism because the data has not shown this. We have seen, however, that growing up in ethnic enclaves and/or socio-economically deprived areas exposed participants to prejudice and discrimination from the majority ethnic group. But instead of stimulating insecure or hostile responses, this contact with discrimination produced narratives of relating to right-wing populism and seeing things from the other side.

As surprising as it may be to see the participants being able to relate to and look at matters from the right-wing populist perspective, the narratives they shared about their attempts to relate not being reciprocated by the majority social group is deeply concerning. Equal citizenship represented both an aspiration of this sense of belonging

as well as an obstacle to it. To feel at home and belong there – to a significant degree – was to be made to feel at home and belong there. The presence of role-model natives has a significant potential in facilitating such sentiment.

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