

Islamic anti-patriarchal liberation psychology: A framework to decolonize psychology for Muslims

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journals.sagepub.com/home/fap**Sobia F Ali-Faisal** 

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Abstract

Due to the focus in psychology on Euro-American centric ontologies and epistemologies, many non-European psychologists have been calling for the decolonization of the field. In joining this call, I propose an Islamic anti-patriarchal liberation psychology framework to guide psychological knowledge production and application within contexts in which some or most people identify as Muslim. Using Martín-Baró's proposal of three essential tasks of liberation psychology as a guide, my framework explains how and why it is necessary to decolonize psychological knowledge production and application in such contexts. The first task requires the privileging of Muslim voices, with Muslims being conceptualized as diverse, racialized peoples. The second task involves challenging the internalization of colonial ways of thinking among Muslims. The final task asks researchers and practitioners to recover Islamic histories of scholarship, Muslims' sense of community, and queer and feminine ways of being. Together, these tasks can provide an adaptable guide for psychological knowledge production and application for Muslims in a wide variety of contexts.

Keywords

Islamic feminism, anti-patriarchal thought, decolonization, liberation psychology, Muslims, Canada

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It has been noted for some time that there is a need to decolonize psychology and create a psychology of the oppressed (Adams et al., 2015; Bulhan, 1985, 2015; Fanon, 1968; Martín-Baró, 1994; Moane, 1999; Nobles, 2015; Pillay, 2017). Most mainstream psychology has been formulated by and for Euro-US populations by psychologists who ignore global and historic influences (Bhatia, 2017). By acting in myopic ways to create a psychology largely focused on privileged populations, psychologists mostly ignore racialized and oppressed communities (Arnett, 2008). Consequently, theorists have formulated conceptually limited ideas based on their mainly white, Euro-US populations and imagined a mythic normative ideal wherein the lives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) and those of the Global South (Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania) are evaluated against Western hegemonic ontology (Adams et al., 2015; Bulhan, 1985). In this paper, I propose using Islamic anti-patriarchal liberation psychology to decolonize psychological research and practice, and to create an inclusive psychology that accommodates the multiple identities of Muslims, including cisgender men and women, two-spirit (Indigenous Muslims), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQIA) Muslims.

Positionality of the author

Tuck and Yang (2012) caution that people of colour who live in a settler colonial nation-state are still settlers who benefit from the continued theft of Indigenous lands and, as Phung (2011) notes, can often reproduce derogatory settler colonial narratives of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, when settlers of colour (SOC) do not acknowledge their status as settlers in their critical work, Tuck and Yang believe their efforts of decolonization become incommensurable with decolonization. Although South Asia (my family's origin) was once colonized by the British, and although SOC do not benefit from the power and privilege held by white settlers (Phung, 2011), Tuck and Yang declare that decolonization work by SOC: a) requires recognition that the various experiences of colonization differ and that SOC reside on colonized lands, and b) should include calls to decolonize the lands upon which they live. I am the daughter of Sunni Muslim Punjabi Pakistani immigrants, born on Treaty 6 Territory. I propose this framework as I live and work on the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq First Nation. Phung (2011) notes that SOC are aware that we are not from here, and that we have never really belonged. But, she warns, since many settlers often perpetuate narratives of entitlement to land and thereby ignore the fact that they live on stolen Indigenous lands, SOC who are allies of Indigenous peoples should not create "self-indigenizing" narratives within their communities. Therefore, I recognize and assert that my call to decolonize epistemologies and ontologies for Muslims must come alongside my call to decolonize the lands of Indigenous nations across Turtle Island.

Toward decolonizing psychology for Muslims

Bulhan (1985) notes that if the field of psychology is to be decolonized then there must be a focus away from the individual toward the collective well-being of the oppressed. He also recommends shifting the attention from people adjusting to their circumstances to concentrating on exploring and understanding strategies for empowerment. Instead of viewing people as passive victims, he suggests viewing people as individuals with the ability to create change. Rather than perceiving behaviour as instinctual and valuing the creation of generalizable, universal knowledge, Bulhan (2015) asks psychologists to promote human needs and emphasize the creation of context-specific knowledge that stems from the people. To accomplish this shift in psychological research and application, scholars in psychology (e.g. Adams et al., 2015; Moane, 1999) recommend using Ignacio Martín-Baró's (1994) conceptualization of liberation psychology, an application of social psychological methods to work toward the liberation of the oppressed. In theorizing liberation psychology, Martín-Baró (1994) proposed three main tasks: 1) privileging marginalized voices; 2) de-ideologization, in which ideologies considered the "natural" ways of being, are disrupted; and 3) recovering historical memory, in which memories of the colonized, repressed by colonizers, are recovered. Originating in Latin America, liberation psychology focuses on increasing the critical consciousness of the oppressed, also known as the process of conscientization (Freire, 1972), and utilizing qualitative participatory action research (PAR) methodologies (Fals-Borda, 1987; Lykes, 2013; Montero, 2009) for knowledge production. Psychological research and application using this framework is centred around oppressed populations, making it applicable to various contexts. Both the parameters of the research methods and the application of the research findings are determined by the population with whom the research is conducted. Therefore, scholars have suggested the application of liberation psychology as a means of empowering oppressed communities and producing and applying psychological knowledge by and for the oppressed.

Lykes and Moane (2009) argue for a feminist liberation psychology in which liberation psychology with its focus on anti-coloniality and liberation of the oppressed is combined with feminist psychology with its focus on the liberation of women and 2SLGBTQQIA peoples. This merger, they suggest, can extract knowledge from the field of psychology to develop psychological theory, research, and practice. They argue that both liberation psychologists and feminists have created knowledge that challenges male-centric and Euro-centric psychological theories, methods and constructs and have engaged in transformative social actions. Indeed, such a merger, when applied to Muslim populations, would challenge not only colonial impositions but also patriarchal oppression, under which Muslims of all genders often struggle to thrive.

The need for a decolonial framework

Although some strides have been made in feminist psychology (Lykes & Moane, 2009), Islamophobic and Orientalist theories about Muslim women and the men in their lives remain. For example, in her writings, pioneering American feminist psychologist Phyllis Chesler depicts Muslim women as weak and brainwashed (Chesler, 2010) while Muslim men are presented as extraordinarily patriarchal and violent toward women (Chesler, 2009; Chesler & Bloom, 2012). Indeed, the psychological literature on non-Euro-US populations often holds this Orientalist lens (Adams et al., 2015). Said (1978) introduced the concept of Orientalism as a discourse whereby Europeans and Americans rendered North African and West and South Asian societies as exotic, uncivilized, unsophisticated, and in need of Western interventions. Muslims were often portrayed in hypersexualized ways in the imaginings of Orientalist European writers who depicted Muslim societies as barbaric and animalistic (Ahmed, 2002). Said states that Orientalism is a form of thought, based on the assumptions of ontological and epistemological supremacy of “the Occident” (i.e. the West) over “the Orient”, such that “the Orient” is characterized as ontologically emotional, subservient, and lazy and epistemologically illogical and mythological, while “the Occident” is viewed as rational and industrious in their ontology and epistemologically logical and scientific. This dichotomous understanding informs academic theory production such that there appears a distinction between an “uncivilized East” and a “civilized West”. It is a discourse in which a scholar exterior to “the Orient” re-imagines “the Orient” for the consumption of “the Occident.” Although one may prefer to believe such imaginings are in the past, Orientalist representations of Muslims in psychological literature are currently present (see Vandello, 2016) which render the West as rational, thinking, logical, and intellectual while Islam is painted as brutish, radical, irrational, and illogical. Indeed, much of the quantitative psychological research on Muslims paints Muslims in unsophisticated ways, excluding analyses of the many contextual factors that impact the lives of Muslims (Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Haque et al., 2016; Sheridan & North, 2004).

In their review of the limited psychological research on Muslims between 1991 and 2011, Amer and Bagasra (2013) noted the lack of valid and culturally sensitive research instruments as one of the limitations of the research, noting that many “frustrated” (p. 138) scholars developed their own measures, sometimes without investigating psychometric properties before use, while others chose to use Eurocentric measures despite lack of psychometric data demonstrating applicability to Muslim populations. Using such measures resulted in low reliabilities. Additionally, they found conceptual insensitivities in the constructs being measured such that labels were often not clearly understood by respondents. In their review of the clinical psychology research on Muslims from 2006 to 2015,

Haque et al. (2016) found that some researchers and theorists working on the mental health of Muslims asserted that Western clinical psychological models were compatible with Islamic values and could be applied to Muslims, while others proposed modified Eurocentric theoretical models for Muslim populations, and only a few researchers designed new, Islamically-informed mental health interventions. Although Haque et al. (2016) note that in the last 10 to 15 years Muslim-specific measures of religiosity, experiences of religious discrimination, and coping have been developed, and they highlight some publications that illuminate historical accounts of a psychology based on Islamic concepts and traditions, they do not engage specifically with the question of decolonizing psychological knowledge and practice related to Muslims.

Some Muslim psychologists have proposed the field of Islamic psychology to remedy the gap in psychology (Kaplick & Skinner, 2017; Sahin, 2013; Skinner, 2010, 2018). Two main conceptualizations have been offered. First, Islamic psychology has been described as a psychology that is developed from and informed by Islamic sources and concepts (Kaplick & Skinner, 2017; Skinner, 2018). Psychological concepts, such as the self, are understood in the ways described within Islamic tradition. In their review Haque et al. (2016) highlight the development of Islamically-informed theoretical models and frameworks to address the mental health of Muslims, though none appear to have been evaluated for efficacy in clinical practice. Second, Islamic psychology has been described as a psychology influenced not by Islam but rather by Muslims who are influenced by Islam and in which the subject and object of study are Muslims (Sahin, 2013). Psychological concepts are understood in the ways that Muslims practise or exhibit these concepts in line with Islamic traditions. In both literatures, the field is categorized as a psychology of religion (Haque et al., 2016; Kaplick & Skinner, 2017; Rothman & Coyle, 2018; Sahin, 2013; Skinner, 2018), and the focus is mainly on mental health (Awaad & Ali, 2015; Haque, 2004; Haque et al., 2016; Kaplick & Skinner, 2017; Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013; Omrani et al., 2012; Rothman & Coyle, 2018; Skinner, 2010, 2018; Yaacob, 2013), while other areas of psychology, such as social psychology, are excluded. Although there is a recognition that “Western” psychology may be culturally inappropriate for most Muslims, the inherent colonial nature of the field is not explicitly recognized or challenged (Badri, 1979; Haque, 2004; Haque et al., 2016; Rothman & Coyle, 2018; Sahin, 2013; Skinner, 2010, 2018); rather, psychological concepts are understood from the perspective of the Euro-US experience. In this literature the individual is situated as the centre of attention and study, while the health and well-being of the community are not addressed (Haque et al., 2016; Kaplick & Skinner, 2017; Skinner, 2018). Although the field of Islamic psychology has been proposed to counter the Euro-US-centric lens of mainstream psychology and to create space for Muslims in the field, it is not being proposed as a psychology of the oppressed, nor a decolonized psychology.

Conceptualizing Muslims

Considering Muslims are a global population of 1.8 billion people (Diamant, 2019) with immense diversity in all ways, it is important to understand how Muslims' unified experiences of global oppression make the need for a decolonial psychological framework clear.

Muslims as racialized

Within the psychological literature Muslims are mainly conceptualized as a religious group (Haque, 2004; Haque et al., 2016; Kaplick & Skinner, 2017; Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013; Rothman & Coyle, 2018; Skinner, 2010, 2018), not as oppressed, marginalized, and colonized communities. However, many scholars argue that Muslims would be more accurately described as a globally racialized population (Aydin, 2016; Garner & Selod, 2015; Jamal, 2009; Khoshnevis, 2019; Meer, 2008; Moosavi, 2015; Selod, 2015, 2019). Racialization is a process enacted by those in power (identified as white) of 'othering' those with less power. This is done by ascribing racial/ethnic identities to those with less power to differentiate those identified as white from those viewed as inferior. Therefore, despite their diversity, all members of the "othered" group are viewed as being influenced by their race/ethnicity in everything they do, think, and feel (Gans, 2017; Garner & Selod, 2015). The process of racializing Muslims is realized through the efforts of the state (Al-Saji, 2010; Aydin, 2016; Bakht, 2008; Selod, 2019), the media (see Jawani, 2006), systems, such as state policies (Garner & Selod, 2015), how Muslims are imagined and described (Garner & Selod, 2015) and, in non-Muslim majority countries, discursively excluded from belonging to their nation (Selod, 2015). Muslims living in Muslim-majority nations, most of which were once colonized by Europeans, also experience racialization through the processes of neocolonialism (Nkrumah, 1965) and metacolonialism (Bulhan, 2015). In neocoloniality nation-states appear to be independent and sovereign but their economic and political systems are controlled by outside forces, namely their former colonizers and the United States (Bulhan, 2015; Nkrumah, 1965). Metacolonialism is globalization and the latest stage of colonialism. Bulhan (2015) explains that metacolonialism is a colonization of: economics, wealth, and self-evaluation; individual and group behaviour both nationally and internationally; physical space; place; time and human energy; compassion; language and identity; and medicines and madness. Its motivations and goals are material exploitation, cultural domination, psychological self-promotion, and controlling the psychological and social being of the metacolonized. Although, within metacolonialism Western interests may find collaborators amongst the powerful in metacolonized nations, the peoples of those nations find no benefit from such partnerships. Consequently, metacolonized nations continue to be exploited and their people viewed through the lens of Western, white supremacy, including Muslim-majority nations (Dabashi, 2008). Consequently, Muslims in Muslim-majority nations become "othered" within

global systems of knowledge production and application, which are dominated by Western institutions (Bulhan, 2015; Dabashi, 2008).

Although Muslims are a diverse and geographically dispersed religious group, various historical and social processes render them oppressed populations. These include: the history of colonization by European nations and peoples (Ahmed, 2002; Aydin, 2016), the imperialist invasion and military occupation of Muslim-majority countries by the United States, aided by Orientalist propaganda (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Dabashi, 2008; Toor, 2012), the stereotypical depictions of Muslims in media (Alsultany, 2012; Shaheen, 2009), the securitization of Muslims (Jamil, 2017), neocolonial and metacolonial impositions (Bulhan, 2015; Dabashi, 2008), and the increased levels of Islamophobia globally (Esposito & Kalin, 2011; Pratt & Woodlock, 2016). Muslims are given a racial identity to differentiate them from those in power, othering Muslims and rendering Islamophobia a form of violent oppression (Garner & Selod, 2015; Jamal, 2009; Khoshnevis, 2019; Moosavi, 2015; Selod, 2015, 2019). However, racialization also creates a group identity around which those who are racialized can rally as a political strategy (Garner & Selod, 2015), thereby increasing solidarity among a diverse population and creating a collective consciousness of shared struggles, oppressors, and cooperative resistance strategies. Therefore, Muslims' racialized status must be recognized and incorporated into the production and application of psychological knowledge, processes that should be decided by Muslims for Muslims to fully appreciate and accurately represent the varied lived experiences of Muslims and to maintain control of such narratives.

Analysis of intersectionality and the matrix of domination. The diversity of Muslim identities requires an intersectional analysis (Crenshaw, 1991) and an understanding of the matrix of oppression (Collins, 2000). Coined by Black feminist legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality is an analytical framework that considers how interlocking systems of power and oppression impact marginalized peoples and communities, especially racialized communities. This analysis forces the recognition and examination of multiple marginalized identities and how individuals experience oppression at their intersections. The matrix of domination, as determined by Black feminist scholar Patricia Collins (2000), describes how power is organized in society. Currently, the psychological research on Muslims ignores the cultural, religious, and gender diversity of Muslims, among other identities, making it difficult to interpret research results in a meaningful manner (Amer & Bagasra, 2013; Haque et al., 2016). The incorporation of intersectionality within the matrix of domination would thus require a recognition and analysis of how gender (including transgender and non-binary), race/ethnicity, culture, class, ability, sexual orientation, size, age, caste, skin shade, and language intersect within Muslim communities and how structures of oppression (e.g. racism, classism, sexism, casteism, etc.), as manifested both within and outside Muslim communities, influence Muslims' experiences.

Islamic anti-patriarchal liberation psychology: The framework

The proposed framework incorporates Martín-Baró's (1994) three tasks of liberation psychology – privileging Muslim voices, de-ideologizing, and recovering Muslims' shared historical memory – to guide psychological research and application on Muslims. The application of an anti-patriarchal Islamic lens is central to this framework and is integrated within privileging Muslim voices as it highlights the contributions of anti-patriarchal Islamic scholars.

Task 1: Privileging Muslim voices

The process of privileging Muslims voices involves both creating space for Muslims to share their knowledge and the application of Muslims' knowledge to understanding Muslims' lived experiences and addressing issues of importance within Muslim communities and societies. This process can be achieved through using decolonial research methods when producing knowledge and applying the lens of anti-patriarchal Islamic scholarship to acknowledge a diversity of lived experiences.

Privileging Muslim voices through decolonial research methods. Standard, colonial methods of knowledge and theory production have been used to mine, control, disregard, categorize, and devalue the knowledge of the colonized (Munoz, 1999). Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Unangax scholar Eve Tuck (2009) advise that decolonizing ways of knowing must centre compassion, care, and accountability. One of the main tasks of liberation psychology is to privilege the voices of those marginalized. This means including Muslims in both the production and application of psychological knowledge. Linda Tuhiwai Smith recommends only qualitative methods of research be used to decolonize knowledge. This means a turn away from the positivism of Euro-US colonial science to a social constructionist approach that assumes human experience is negotiated historically, culturally, and linguistically (Willig, 2013). Such an approach allows researchers to fulfil all three tasks of liberation psychology. Along with privileging Muslim voices, qualitative methods create space for recovering and eliciting historical memory, thereby bringing forth traditional knowledge (which may be liberatory for many Muslims) and laying bare how colonialism and patriarchy have sought to destroy the identities of Muslims. The knowledge produced from such research can be used to challenge assumptions about everyday realities considered “natural” and increase critical consciousness to promote “constructions of identity that provide a sense of unity and purpose around . . . alternative understandings of history and progress” (Adams et al., 2015, p. 217). Qualitative methods allow for the inclusion of a variety of voices, with a variety of lived experiences, enhancing our understanding of the diversity of Muslim experience.

Privileging Muslim voices through anti-patriarchal Islamic scholarship. Many Muslim women scholars who engage in anti-patriarchal interpretations of Islam do not identify as

feminists (e.g. Barlas, 2002; Wadud, 2008), viewing “feminism” as a Euro-US-centric tradition. They instead choose to focus on anti-patriarchal struggles. Anti-patriarchal resistance work is also found in the work of queer Muslim scholars, who ground their social justice and liberation work in the Qur’an (Kugle, 2010) and consider their resistance to be informed by Islamic liberation theology, a tradition which prioritizes liberation from oppression of all forms and views the Qur’an as both a liberating text and one which needs to be liberated from oppressive interpretations (Esack, 1997; Kugle, 2010). Therefore, in the tradition of both Amina Wadud (2008) and Asma Barlas (2002), I too choose the label “anti-patriarchal.” However, as some Muslim women scholars do identify with and use the term “feminist”, “Islamic feminism” will be explained to provide context for anti-patriarchal Islamic scholarship, and those who identify as feminist will be identified as such.

Feminist Islamic scholar Margot Badran (2013) defines Islamic feminism as feminism in an Islamic paradigm. Badran (2006) explains:

Islamic feminism explicates the idea of gender equality as part and parcel of the Qur’anic notion of equality of all *insan* (human beings) and calls for the implementation of gender equality in the state, civil institutions, and everyday life. It rejects the notion of a public/private dichotomy . . . conceptualising a holistic *umma* [global community] in which Qur’anic ideals are operative in all space. (para. 2)

To achieve social justice, anti-patriarchal Islamic scholars challenge patriarchal interpretations of Islam through re-reading the Islamic texts (Qur’an and Hadith, or Prophetic traditions) (Ali, 2006; Barlas, 2002; Mernissi, 1991; Wadud, 2008), arguing that patriarchal readings, most conducted in the ninth century, have disempowered women (Badran, 2013) as well as 2SLGBTQQIA Muslims. Prominent Islamic scholar Amina Wadud (1999, 2008, 2009) argues that patriarchy is a *haram* (Islamically prohibited) system as it places men as mediators between women and God. She explains that patriarchal male scholars have taken it upon themselves to determine God’s commands for women, as well as 2SLGBTQQIA peoples. By claiming to have absolute knowledge of God’s wishes, these men, then, equate their expertise and knowledge with God and commit the ultimate sin of *shirk* (equating others/oneself with God). Barlas (2002) echoes Wadud’s arguments and additionally identifies patriarchy as *zulm*, or injustice, and because God is just, patriarchy, she argues, cannot be God’s will. In his forward to Wadud’s book, *Inside the Gender Jihad* (Wadud, 2008), Islamic scholar Khaled Abou El Fadl agrees with Wadud and characterizes patriarchy as immoral and unIslamic. Muslim anti-patriarchal scholars use Islamic discourse as their principal discourse in their quest for liberation, holding Islamic teachings as central, and viewing Islam as egalitarian, just, and ethical (Badran, 2013; Barlas, 2002; Wadud, 2008). Muslim anti-patriarchal scholars view Islam not just as a religion but as a holistic spiritual practice that encompasses all aspects of Muslims’ lives. Unlike patriarchal interpretations, Islamic anti-patriarchal thought allows for flexibility of interpretations and calls into question strict and rigid interpretations of the texts. Islamic

anti-patriarchal scholarship moves away from the very ritualistic focus of patriarchal interpretations to a more spiritual focus while at the same time recognizing the importance of rituals in maintaining a sense of community.

An Islamic anti-patriarchal approach to decolonization also offers a necessary critique of the attempts of male Muslim anti-colonial thinkers to decolonize Muslim societies by using women's bodies as an ideological proxy. Pakistani feminist poet Fahmida Riaz (1973) challenged the Muslim male decolonization narrative which depicted Muslim women's donning of the veil as a metaphor for decolonizing Muslim-majority lands. For many anti-colonial thinkers, colonization was a process of unveiling, understood as a metaphor for rape, in which the land was imagined as the body of a woman to be possessed (Faulkner, 1996). Veiling, therefore, was promoted as resistance to colonialization as much as it was conceptualized as protection for a woman's body (Fanon, 1965). Although the Orientalist discourse about Muslims has included (Ahmed, 2002; Said, 1978) hyper-sexualization of Muslim women's bodies and an obsession with unveiling Muslim women, Muslim anti-patriarchal thought demands the battle of anti-colonial resistance be removed from women's bodies, and that women and 2SLGBTQIA Muslims also be equal partners in the decolonization process.

Islamic anti-patriarchal scholarship privileges Muslim women's and 2SLGBTQIA Muslims' voices, focuses on anti-patriarchal readings of texts, quests for social and gender justice, accepts a variety of Muslim experiences, recognizes the right of all Muslims to self-identification, rejects dependence on a select class of male authorities for official interpretation of the texts (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2002; Mernissi, 1991; Wadud, 1999, 2008) and anti-colonial thought (Riaz, 1973), focuses on Islam and God-consciousness (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2002; Mernissi, 1991; Wadud, 1999, 2008), and recognizes the agency of humans to maintain dignity and personal moral authority (Wadud, 2008). Its use in collaboration with liberation psychology can empower Muslim communities to develop theory, research, and practice relevant to not just Muslim women and 2SLGBTQIA peoples, but also cisgender, straight, Muslim men who find themselves restrained by patriarchy and oppressed by coloniality.

Task 2: De-ideologization

Working toward the process of decolonizing psychological knowledge and practice for Muslims involves challenging ideologies that depict Muslims' everyday realities as "natural" but which work to maintain the oppression of Muslims. Specifically, this involves opposing how European colonization of Muslim societies has created a *coloniality of being*, in which the non-European, non-white colonized being is conceptualized as not being human in the ways the colonizer is human, due to an epistemological consciousness that differs from the colonizer. The colonizer, therefore, imposes upon the colonized their ways of being as the colonized is seen to have no being of their own (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Unfortunately, coloniality of being results in a colonial mentality in which oppression is internalized (Adams et al., 2015).

Scholars in the Global South accommodate their research to Euro-US psychological knowledge (Adams et al., 2015), engaging in what Martín-Baró (1994) referred to as “scientific mimicry” (p. 20). Badri (1979, as cited in Kaplick & Skinner, 2017) also noted this trend, stating that Muslim psychologists had an uncritical acceptance of Euro-US psychological theories to the detriment of Muslims. Sahin (2013) explains that in the early 20th century many Muslims travelled from Muslim majority countries to American and European academic institutions and, upon returning to their home countries, spread Euro-US psychological knowledge among the people, which continues to inform Muslims’ understandings of themselves to this day.

In explaining the impact of colonization on Muslim societies, Ahmed (2002) clarifies that European colonization paralyzed Muslim societies and imposed European perceptions of race and class. Ahmed notes that colonization destroyed the confidence of Muslims as colonial oppression included not only severe physical punishments for defiance of colonial impositions but also psychological torture and humiliation, with long-lasting impacts, such that Muslims lost their sense of agency over defining Muslimness. Similarly, speaking of the current state of the colonization of Muslim minds around the world, Khaled Abou El Fadl (2020) states in his lecture that by “colonizing of the Muslim mind I don’t mean injecting Western values into the Muslim mind. . . . Colonizing the Muslim mind means that you’ve injected a sense of dread, a sense of insecurity in the Muslim mind about their own tradition, about their own faith, and about their own law” (15:30).

Abou El Fadl notes that global Islamophobia has left Muslims feeling fear about their faith and traditions. Islamophobia, he explains, has succeeded in making it difficult for Muslims to feel empowered by the dignity and worth associated with Islam, and Islamophobia creates challenges for Muslims to view their faith as a form of empowerment and pride. He explains:

The problem with the current form of colonialism, the colonialism of Islamophobia is that it is far more lethal, far more dangerous than military colonialism, because most Muslims are not aware that they are, in fact, colonized and that . . . it’s very difficult for a Muslim’s relationship to Islam today to exist without having to go through the filter of Islamophobia. (Abou El Fadl, 2020, 27:19)

Esposito and Kalin (2011) define Islamophobia as:

a form of racism because it targets a group of people and incites hatred against them on the basis of their religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and ethics backgrounds” and that “racism has come to combine not only race but also ethnicity, language, culture, and religion all at the same time. (p. 11)

Abou El Fadl (2020) describes Islamophobia as a form of psychological abuse that has left Muslims all around the globe traumatized. With Abou El Fadl’s words in mind, the decolonizing process for Muslims must also involve resisting the mental

colonization imposed by Islamophobia. The research suggests Islamophobia has negative impacts on the psychological and emotional health of Muslims (Elkassem et al., 2018; Musa, 2019). Creating a spiritual space in which Muslims can challenge the contamination of Islamophobia to understand their Muslimness, and their relationship to Islam, will require the process of conscientization (Freire, 1972) to raise the critical consciousness of Muslims to the insidious, inconspicuous, and direct ways in which Islamophobia colonizes Muslim minds. Conscientization creates space to enable Muslims to determine the best ways in which to challenge that mental colonization, which has left Muslims fearful about and insecure in their beliefs, defining their relationship to Islam in reaction to Islamophobia, and internalizing Islamophobic narratives.

In addition to challenging Euro-US hegemony, the scholarship of Islamic scholars working with an anti-patriarchal lens can also be used to challenge the patriarchal Islamic discourse which conceptualizes traditional gender roles as objective truth mandated by God (Badawi, 2016). Presented by patriarchal male scholars as “human nature”, Muslims are often taught behaviour is gender-specific and men and women must occupy separate social spheres, though they are seen as spiritually equal (Badawi, 2016). Anti-patriarchal Islamic scholars challenge this by describing the Qur’an as an egalitarian text through which anti-patriarchal action was put into practice by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2002; Wadud, 1999) and by highlighting the various ways in which women in the first Muslim community, of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), were active participants in their society, including outside the home (Ahmed, 1992). The application of an Islamic anti-patriarchal liberation psychology lens can challenge both colonial ontological impositions on Muslims and their societies as well as the imposition of patriarchal rules on Muslims of all genders.

With this proposal I recognize that I join a tradition of Muslim scholars and thinkers in the field of critical Muslim studies who challenge Western hegemony, critique Eurocentrism and positivism, honour the critique offered by Orientalism, and incorporate decolonial thinking (ReOrient Editorial Board, 2015). Critical Muslim studies is “de-naturalizing the historiographies, ideologies, and teleologies that are normalized, produced, and enabled by unquestioned protocols of knowledge formation” (ReOrient Editorial Board, 2015, pp. 8–9). In essence, the work of these scholars involves de-ideologizing Western hegemonic impositions on Muslim thought and practice. Although multidisciplinary (including disciplines within the humanities and social sciences) (Critical Muslim Studies, 2017) and with a focus on Muslim life as opposed to Islamic texts (Zahra Institute, 2019), critical Muslim studies does not, yet, incorporate psychological scholarship.

Task 3: Recovering historical memory

It is not possible to return to a pre-colonial way of life for Muslims; however, there are indeed elements of our shared history, the revival of which should be incorporated in psychological knowledge production and application. This final task of

liberation psychology involves recovering: Muslim scholarship, both of men and women; our focus on community; and queer and feminine ways of being.

Recovering Muslim scholarship. Muslim thinking and scholarship on human psychology and well-being have a long, rich tradition that is rarely invoked when creating new psychological knowledge. Influenced by religious beliefs and traditions, along with Islamic spirituality, Muslim scholars have theorized the human mind and behaviour, writing expansively on issues of human psychology for centuries (Haque, 2004). The earliest records of Muslim philosophers contemplating the human mind and behaviour date back to the 9th century with the writings of Al-Kindi of Baghdad, who wrote about sleep and dreams, as well as sorrow. Over the centuries Muslim philosophers and physicians have written about and discussed many topics including psychotherapy and a form of cognitive behavioural therapy (Badri, 2013; Haque, 2004), emotional instability, psychosomatic symptoms, social psychology, including human connections, friendship, love, and vanity (Haque, 2004; Mora-Mérida & Martín-Jorge, 2009), sleeping sickness, loss of memory, lovesickness, the soul, the brain, thinking processes, morality, the mind-body relationship, sensation, perception, imagination, cognition, intellect, human nature and the self, the healing arts, and types of learning (Haque, 2004).

Equally as important is the scholarship of Muslim women throughout Islamic history. In his 40-volume biographical dictionary of women hadith (Prophetic traditions) scholars Nadwi (2007) lists 8000 women hadith scholars he found through his research. These are women throughout the history of Islam who taught the Qur'an and transmitted hadith. These scholars include a medieval jurist in Aleppo who issued *fatwas* (rulings) and advised her husband on how to issue his fatwas; a 7th-century Medina jurist who issued key fatwas on hajj rituals and commerce; another 7th-century jurist living in Damascus who lectured in the male section of the mosque, prayed next to men, and issued a fatwa used to this day which allowed women to pray in the same position as men; a 10th-century jurist who travelled through Syria and Egypt, teaching other women; and a 15th-century woman who taught hadith at the Prophet's grave in Medina (Power, 2007). Although these women taught Islamic knowledge, and not psychological thinking, there is great value in their contribution to understanding and navigating life as a Muslim. The rich and invaluable contributions of Muslim thinkers to the understanding of Muslim life and the human mind and behaviour span centuries, making the exclusion of Muslims' contributions to understandings of human psychology especially glaring and the need to recover this scholarship significant.

Recovering focus on community. A component of recovering historical memory for Muslims involves a shift, in the research, away from a focus on the individual toward a focus on the collective experience and the impact of social systems on Muslims. Both Islamic teachings and Muslim-majority cultures have traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of community (*ummah*) (Mernissi, 1991), both in terms of taking care of the community and relying

upon the community for support for the individual. The literature on Islamic psychology demonstrates a focus on the individual (Haque et al., 2016; Kaplick & Skinner, 2017; Skinner, 2018). Yet, the collectivism of Muslim individuals, communities, societies, and cultures requires that any psychological study of Muslims integrate both a recognition of this worldview and the role it plays in the psychological realities of Muslims. Additionally, such work requires a critical assessment of the impact of social systems and systems of oppression upon Muslims, not only to understand the role of oppression but also to enhance Muslim well-being. Such a shift to community-centric ways of being does not imply that the mind and behaviour of the individual is not to be understood. Rather, as mentioned in his critique of psychology's exclusive focus on Eurocentric ontologies, Bulhan (1985) notes that:

[u]nderlying much of prevailing psychological theory and practice are the ethics of individualism, the ideal of individual autonomy, a particular concept of basic human needs, as well as an exclusive emphasis on individual change, which together reflect fundamental cultural as well as class biases. (p. 256)

Bulhan (1985) proposes that if the field is to be decolonized, then the focus must shift away from the individual toward the collective well-being of the oppressed.

Recovering queer and feminine ways of being. Texts written by Muslims over the centuries paint a picture of Muslim societies that were comfortable with gender equity, gender fluidity, queerness, transgender identity, and expressions of the feminine by men (Hendricks, 2010; Kugle, 2010). Queer Muslim scholar Siraj al-Haqq Kugle (2010) proposes that the Qur'an does not prohibit homosexuality. Rather, he suggests, that as the Qur'an is open to many interpretations, allowing for a 'sexuality-sensitive' interpretation of the story of Lot, which is often used in patriarchal readings to condemn homosexuality. Instead of prohibiting same-sex consensual sex, this story can rather be understood to prohibit same-sex rape and using sex as coercion against vulnerable peoples (Kugle, 2010). In explaining Islamic understandings of transgender identity, Kugle relies on 12th-century Islamic Sufi mystic and scholar Muhyiddin Ibn'Arabî (1165–1240), who is often credited by current anti-patriarchal Islamic scholars for speaking of equality between the genders (Shaikh, 2012). For Ibn'Arabî maleness and femaleness were not biological descriptions. Rather they were forces of spirit that symbolized an active creative role or a passive receptive role, respectively. Ibn'Arabî did not associate these forces with actual biological maleness or femaleness (Kugle, 2010). These forces were instead associated with the human soul, which as Kugle (2010) states, "is the identity of the person who is animated by the spirit of God's merciful breath of creation" (p. 237). He continues to explain that in Sufi traditions "the soul, reflecting on the body, perceives itself to be female or male, or possibly both-male-and-female or neither-male-nor-female" (p. 237). Therefore, although expressed in duality, Muslims have a historical tradition of gender fluidity, equality

of the feminine with the masculine, and acceptance of feminine expressions. Indeed, the early ummah, or Muslim community, had an acceptance of sexual and gender plurality such that gender-variant Muslims thrived and gender-nonconformity was normative (Hamzić, 2016). However, such understandings became suppressed both by traditional heteropatriarchal interpretations of the texts (Ali, 2006; Hamzić, 2016) and by impositions of heteropatriarchal colonial laws regarding sexuality and gender (Hamzić, 2016). Nonetheless, this is a tradition upon which we must rely to move away from heteropatriarchal religious rulings and colonial understandings of gender and sexuality (Lugones, 2010).

Summary

In summary, when engaging in psychological knowledge production and application regarding Muslims the voices of Muslims, conceptualized as racialized and requiring an intersectional analysis, must be privileged. This can be done using decolonized research methods and relying on Islamic anti-patriarchal scholarship in which Muslim women's, and queer and trans Muslims' voices, are privileged, texts are read using an anti-patriarchal lens, Islam, God, and social and gender justice are centred, and diversity of opinions and experiences are recognized (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2002; Mernissi, 1991; Wadud, 1999, 2008). Additionally, psychological knowledge production and application must challenge coloniality of being among Muslims, joining scholars in other disciplines. The de-ideologization process must also challenge patriarchal assumptions impacting the lives of Muslims. Finally, recovering significant elements of our collective histories needs to involve psychological knowledge production and application toward recovering Muslim scholarship, focus on community, Muslim confidence and sense of security in our identities, and queer and feminine ways of being.

Conclusion

The process of decolonizing psychological knowledge production and application for Muslims involves working from an Islamic anti-patriarchal liberation psychology lens. Although psychological research can and has been conducted on Muslims using Euro-US methods and measures, it is a deficient approach to understanding the full lived realities of Muslims. Without accessing Indigenous ways of being among a diversity of Muslim populations we will continue to lack understanding of this racialized and marginalized population. Using the proposed framework, psychological theory, research, and practice can be developed to disrupt the ideology of colonial psychological theory as well as Muslims' understandings of themselves, and work toward animating processes that enable Muslims to thrive within an Islamophobic world.


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