Muslim women moving on from crime

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Citation:

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Abstract

The desistance and resettlement experience of Muslim women is largely invisible in academia, policy and practice. The findings of this review outline the ways in which Muslim women's needs are hidden within academia, policy and practice in favour of examining collective experiences of women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic ('BAME') individuals. Therefore, this chapter highlights the importance of exploring the intersectionality of culture, faith, ethnicity and gender to increase the representation within desistance experiences. This chapter further explored the neglect of Muslim women's needs and experience, in order to encourage greater equality and understanding of minority groups across the criminal justice system. Through an analysis of desistance theorising and insights from practice, this review indicates potential concepts that could be applicable to the resettlement needs of Muslim women. In order to emphasise good practice examples, this chapter introduces the Muslim Women in Prison project, a specialised and culturally-informed through-the-gate service in England and Wales. Finally, the review considers future directions of research.

Key Words: Muslim Women, Desistance, Resettlement, Culture, Ethnicity.

Introduction

In 2020-2021, a total of 223 Muslim women were incarcerated in prison in England and Wales, representing seven percent of the female prison estate (MoJ, 2021a). In the male estate, Muslim prisoners made up seventeen percent of the overall prison population (MoJ, 2021b), in comparison with five percent of the national population (Lammy, 2017). In fact, the Lammy Review[1] (2017) acknowledged that the number of

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[1] The Lammy review was commissioned in 2016 to recommend improvements which could support the reduction of BAME individuals (Adults, Young People and Children) who are involved in the Criminal Justice System. The recommendations highlighted the need for fairer treatment, increased trust and for BAME individuals to be enabled to take more responsibility for their lives.

Muslims in prison had risen by almost 50 percent in the last ten years. While national press is enthusiastic to cover cases relating to Islamic terrorism offences, Muslims in the criminal justice system (CJS) express frustration at the stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists that this perpetuates (Her Majesties Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), 2021; Young, 2006). In reality, the range of convictions among Muslim people is not so limited, with only one percent of Muslim prisoners convicted of an Islamist extremist terrorism related offence (Prison Reform Trust (PRT), 2021). Additionally, any interest in Muslim women who enter prison has not generally transferred into interest in how those same women exit the prison estate. Yet there are some isolated examples of good practice in through-the-gate provision focused on supporting Muslim women, and there are signs of growing interest. In 2007, it was suggested that there was a need for specialist Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic ('BAME'[2]) led, women-only service provisions to reach women who experience additional marginalisation due to discrimination and racism (Women's Resource Centre, 2007; AVA and Agenda, 2017). The Muslim Women in Prison Project (MWiP), based at The Khidmat Centres, Bradford, specialises in providing tailored support for women through-the-gate and beyond[3]. Their work has been instrumental in raising awareness among practitioners in the CJS and local communities of the specific difficulties encountered by Muslim women in prison. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, more organisations have been convicted of their responsibilities (and in many cases, legal duties under the Equality Act, 2010) to take intersectional experiences of institutional racism seriously, and work to confront it (HMIP, 2021). This is perhaps why the MWiP's opportunities to provide advice and training grew even during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Muslim women in the CJS are a diverse group, encompassing those with a range of ethnicities, English language skills, and citizenship status (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019). Some therefore encounter racism and cultural biases in addition to religious discrimination and misogyny (along with other discriminations), yet they share some faith-based commonalities through their religious teachings and practice (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019). The work, therefore, of MWiP, provides an illustration of practice

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[2] While we use the term 'BAME' in this chapter, we recognise that grouping all non-majority culture White people together is far from ideal in capturing their range of backgrounds and experiences. We therefore use the term in inverted commas to indicate our discomfort with the grouping. Nevertheless, we retain the term to align with policy and in order to benefit from the limited research available.
[3] For more information regarding the Muslim Women in Prison Project and the Harmony Hub- http://www.khidmat.org.uk/prisoner-resettlement-support/

which takes seriously the work of understanding an intersectional approach to through-the-gate provision, and applying it to the women they support.

Situated, as it is, on the nexus of gender, religion and (often) race and cultural concerns, MWiP straddles an unusual position. From a policy perspective, it is strongly influenced both by strategies aimed at women in the CJS, and those aimed at people from 'BAME' backgrounds (to date there has been little policy interest in religious differences in the CJS). In terms of policies directed at 'BAME' individuals, HMIP (2021, p.7) has a 'long and complex history in its attempts to address racial inequality'. Many positive steps have been taken to improve racial equality and to reduce racism within prisons, however many of these reactive changes follow publications outlining unlawful racial discrimination, shameful institutional racism and murders of 'BAME' individuals (Home Office, 1999). Recent investigations have continued to highlight the poor treatment and neglect of 'BAME' prisoners and their rehabilitation (Ministry of Justice (MoJ), 2008; Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRE), 2021). Contemporary investigations into race relations also highlight the general over-representation of 'BAME' individuals within the CJS (CRE, 2021). Lammy (2017) argues that the causes of this over-representation and the subsequent answers to it, lies not within the CJS, but within our society more widely. Nevertheless, these reports have outlined new responses to improve 'BAME' experiences, as well as repeating many neglected legacy recommendations from policy and legislation over the last 20 years. Yet there remains a disconnect between general 'BAME' policies and academic research on specific areas of the CJS. One of those areas is in the field of desistance, where 'universal'[4] theories have largely ignored minority voices and their experiences of moving on from committing crime (please see Chapter 7).

This chapter will explore some pertinent general findings for Muslim Women from the wider field of desistance, before examining the limited specific research into desistance among minority groups. Although academic literature is lacking, the third sector has provided significant insights into desistance among 'BAME' groups from

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[4] By not proving applicable to these minority experiences, such theories prove themselves not to truly be universal.

practice, and the chapter therefore then provides an overview of this work. The penultimate section then explores the particular needs and characteristics of Muslim Women, and the implications and challenges that this brings in applying desistance theory. The chapter is summarised with a call to action for researchers to address the shortcomings in attention given to Muslim Women trying to move on from their involvement in the CJS.

Development of Desistance Research and Application to Minority Groups

Desistance, or the process of moving on from committing crime, has clear significance for both policy and practice in the CJS and is widely referenced in official communications. While the research remains largely inadequate in explaining minority experiences, it is nevertheless helpful to highlight some specific findings which are still of use in providing a foundation for a more nuanced understanding of desistance in Muslim women. The widespread importance of an identity shift in desisters' narratives has received so much attention as to prompt the naming of a whole 'type' of desistance, 'identity desistance' (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016, p.570) (sometimes known as 'secondary desistance' (Maruna and Farrall, 2004, p.175). There is solid evidence that, for those whose offending was intrinsically tied up with their understanding of who they were, a change in that perspective was needed to maintain desistance (Maruna 2001, Giordano 2002). Yet the centrality of identity has been questioned in various contexts, not least those desisting from more occasional offending, which includes most female offenders (Goodwin, 2020). There also remains doubt whether identity concerns are a feature of desistance specifically in a neo-liberal late modern Western context which highly values expressive individualism (Bellah et al., 2008), and therefore whether the importance of an identity shift wanes in contexts shaped by other worldviews (Goodwin, 2020).

There has, as explored in Chapter 7, been research into the specific shape of women's experiences of desistance. As well as research that points out the nuances to women's desistance, for example the 'hooks for change' available to them being more often tied to children (Giordano, 2002), some work highlights aspects that seem to be significantly more important to women's desistance than to that of men. Sharpe (2015) notes that the only achievable prosocial identity for the young women in her study was

that of a 'good' mother, and that consequently interactions with social services were of critical importance. It has been further recognised that culture dictates what identities are valued and encouraged, and therefore what hooks and identities are realistic possibilities for desisters (Leverentz, 2014). Sharpe (2015) also found that her participants' experiences of shame were pervasive and deep as they tried to navigate the process of being a good mother. While shame is noted as an aspect of men's experiences (Gadd, 2006), the elevated importance of it among women is becoming more widely recognised (Rutter and Barr, 2021; Gålnander, 2020). It is likely that this importance will only be heightened when working with participants from cultures which place more social emphasis on both shame and honour.

Desistance theory has come a long way in attempting to understand the experiences of women, with some major studies now including women (Farrall et al., 2014) and analysing their data with regards to gender (Giordano et al., 2002). There is even a significant trickle of policy recommendations underscoring the particular shape of women's desistance experiences (Corston, 2007), and especially the crucial importance of healthy relationships in their journeys (Farmer, 2019). While also expanding research into the experiences of overlooked groups, it may be that existing research can be used to provide the academic foundations needed to situate emerging findings within the broader academic understandings in the field. Nevertheless, it is possible that some groups will have had fundamentally different experiences to the historical norm of a white and westernised male desister (Goodwin, 2020). Further, it may be that new findings challenge aspects of what have thus far been key findings in desistance research. Elements of desistance that are thus far taken as foundational might be shown to be specific to white male working class populations. Therefore, further research that centres the experiences of any overlooked group, including minority groups, must keep all these possibilities, which are in themselves not exclusive of each other, in mind.

Desistance among minority groups
Despite most of the desistance research being focused on young, white, working-class males in the UK and USA, studies have started to reflect experiences of those around the world (for example, Hong Kong (Adorjan and Chui, 2012)). There have even been a couple of studies specifically looking at the experiences of those with other ethnic

backgrounds in the UK. Glynn's (2013) work with young Black men in England, which he compared with young Black men in the US, highlighted the centrality of their experiences of racism as they tried to desist from crime. Their desistance was heavily influenced by the racialised structures that surrounded them, with opportunities to succeed heavily bounded by their position as young Black men. He also highlighted the need to enable desisters to confidently engage with their own cultures in order to sufficiently support desistance, thus emphasising the role of ethnicity and culture in shaping a desisting identity (Glynn, 2013). Calverley (2013) also investigated the experiences of young Black men in Britain, as well as young men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. His findings focused on the differences between the groups, with significant variations in how communities featured in desistance efforts, in the job opportunities available to desisters, and cultural differences which impacted the men's experiences. He also notes that some 'BAME' communities are more likely to demonstrate stigmatising attitudes and practices towards those who have offended or engaged in drug use (Calverley, 2013). As a result, Calverley (2013) argues that desistance has a cultural element as well as individual and structural components, with ethnicity as a significant co-variant rather than a factor that fundamentally changes the process of desistance. McNeill and Weaver (2008) suggest that social bonds are even more important to 'BAME' desisters, given the increased roles of family and communities in their lives, when compared to white desisters. Evidently, whether or not research takes a Critical Race Theory perspective (Glynn, 2013) to the topic, culture and ethnicity does have a marked effect on people's experiences of desistance and so deserves more attention. Unfortunately, while recognition of the distinct desistance experiences that *female* desisters from non-white British cultural backgrounds face is occasionally alluded to (Farmer, 2019), it has not, thus far, been academically investigated.

Desistance and resettlement in practice for 'BAME' groups
Following this paucity of academic work even at a very general 'BAME' level, it is widely confirmed in practice and policy that there is insufficient evidence on the differential experiences of 'BAME' people through the CJS (HMIP, 2021; Shingler and Pope, 2018, Lammy, 2017; Young, 2006). There is little attention given to religious differences in desistance and resettlement, although occasionally reports consider 'Muslim' as an alternative category to ethnic minority and so include Muslim

experiences in their writing (PRT, 2017; Young, 2006). Given the current lack of evidence specifically on religious differences, this approach is also taken here. Some reports from both policy and practice have indicated that people from 'BAME' backgrounds do have distinct needs and barriers to resettlement and reintegration after offending. This reflects the common belief among prisoners that their ethnicity has a direct or indirect effect on their experiences of resettlement - although it is not universal (HMIP, 2020; Jacobson et al, 2010). One of the common barriers found is that of experiences, and fear of, discrimination and racism while in prison (HMIP, 2020; Shingler and Pope, 2018; Cox and Sacks-Jones, 2017; Jacobson et al, 2010; Young, 2006). This, in turn, harms efforts to promote a rehabilitative culture within prisons (HMIP, 2020), through damaging relationships between staff and prisoners (PRT, 2021). Experiences of, and perceptions of, discrimination understandably discourages prisoners from divulging personal vulnerabilities to those in authority (HMIP, 2020; Shingler and Pope, 2018). Even if needs are recognised, their access and engagement with services and activities is damaged (HMIP, 2020; Jacobson et al, 2010; Mason et al, 2009). While discrimination has been found to be less common within probation (HMIP, 2021), similar issues of mistrust in authority and poor engagement are likely to travel with people out of the prison estate, even though staff have a poor understanding of such impacts (HMIP, 2021; Young, 2006). Indeed, the evidence suggests that probation staff are unwilling to even discuss issues of ethnicity, culture, and discrimination (HMIP, 2021). Perhaps this perpetuates a lack of culturally informed interventions (HMIP, 2021; Shingler and Pope, 2018; Young, 2006).

In addition to the impact of discrimination within the CJS, 'BAME' individuals are subject to discrimination in society more widely, in areas such as housing and employment (Lammy, 2017; Anwar, 1998), especially if they also have a criminal record (Jacobson et al., 2010; Pager, 2008; Young, 2006). This makes sense of the finding that most resettlement needs of 'BAME' offenders are generic resettlement needs, common to many offenders (Jacobson et al., 2010). Yet there are two aspects which, although generic in themselves, may need to be understood differently as they apply to 'BAME' individuals. The first echoes the previously discussed academic findings of Glynn (2013), where it is recognised that the cultural and ethnic aspects of identity must be taken seriously in order to support identity, or secondary, desistance (Shingler and Pope, 2018; Young, 2006). Secondly, the nature of family and

community relationships changes according to culture, so it is unsurprising that relational interventions can be experienced as culturally irrelevant by people from 'BAME' backgrounds (Jacobson et al., 2010; Shingler and Pope, 2018). Given the variation in culture encompassed by the 'BAME' term, it is again unsurprising that 'BAME' family and community involvement can be viewed as either more supportive or more stigmatising than generalised white and westernised experiences of desistance (HMIP, 2021; Jacobson et al., 2010; Young, 2006; Hadait et al., forthcoming).

Looking more specifically at needs and experiences of 'BAME' women in the CJS, evidence is even more scarce (PRT, 2017). Here there are frequent suggestions that they face increased stigma from their own communities in comparison to 'BAME' men or White women (PRT, 2017; Cox and Sacks-Jones, 2017; Owens, 2010). According to Imkaan (2016, p.5) 'BAME' led service provision should be designed with an 'understanding of notions of culture, the impact of colonisation and patriarchy, and demonstrates an understanding of the impact of racism and discrimination in the lives of women and girls within the context of violence'. Community based services that specialise in supporting the needs of 'BAME' women reportedly 'filled gaps left by the lack of contact with prison staff' (HMIP, 2020, p.33). Examples of support provided by 'BAME' women's specialist services, highlighted the importance of targeting those who have experienced marginalisation, language and cultural barriers within their rehabilitation and resettlement (HMIP, 2020). In addition, there is a gap in provision relating to family interventions, and where they do exist, they are not always sufficiently culturally sensitive (HMIP, 2020; Hadait et al., forthcoming). Evidently, there is much space for a more thorough and holistic academic analysis of the resettlement and desistance experiences of people who occupy intersectional spaces of both gender and cultural minorities.

To enhance more tailored support and resettlement, community-based provisions such as Women's Centre's, provide a specialist 'one stop shop' services (Worrall and Gelsthorpe, 2009). These services enable women to access a variety of local agencies tailored to their specific needs e.g., housing, debt, employment, mental health, parenting and addiction support (Gelsthorpe and Hedderman, 2012). This approach enables women to engage in addressing their needs, by engaging with multi-agency

service providers, in an accessible and safe environment. In 2015, the findings of a Ministry of Justice assessment of Women's Centres in England outlined a 30% re-offending rate for 5,973 women who received support. This was compared with a 35% reoffending rate for a matched control group of similar women who had offended (MoJ,2015). More recent data indicates much improved results with a less than 5% reoffending rate for women accessing Women's Centres, compared to a national average for women at 23.4% (MoJ, 2018 cited in Women's Budget Group (WBG), 2020). Despite the evidence indicating the worth and importance of Women's Centres, the funding for these services is often short-term, insecure, inadequate and precarious.

Muslim Women's Needs and Characteristics

Finding both academic and practice based research specifically relating to Muslim women in the CJS and their associated needs is challenging (PRT, 2017). Some of these needs and barriers to resettlement can be inferred from Muslim women's intersectional experiences within Britain as a religious minority; often a cultural and ethnic minority; sometimes a language minority, as well as other challenges relating to citizenship status. However, there are a couple of sources that do provide evidence of their specific needs and experiences. Experiences of discrimination towards people from a 'BAME' background are echoed and frequently layered on top of religious discrimination against Muslims in the CJS, where religious devotion is equated to extremism and risk (Mohammed and Nicholls, 2020; Cox and Sacks-Jones, 2017; PRT, 2007). Problems with language, too, are often mentioned (Hadait et al., forthcoming), especially among older Muslim women who may speak English infrequently in the community (Cox and Sacks-Jones, 2017; PRT, 2017). Once again, the acute experiences of stigma in the community towards both Muslim women and their families are highlighted (Cox and Sacks-Jones, 2017; PRT, 2017).

It has been argued that both shame and stigma impact Muslim women's resettlement as they often feel like they are serving another prison sentence within the communities to gain the forgiveness of family members (The Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2018). Shame is a shared experience for many criminalised women (Rutter and Barr, 2021). However, within South Asian cultures an Islamic term 'Izzat' is used to broadly reflect

honour and shame (Ganeshpanchan and Masson, 2021). Gilbert, Gilbert and Sanghera (2004, p. 112) describe 'Izzat' as a 'complex set of rules an Asian individual follows in order to protect the family honour and keep his/her position in the community'. 'Izzat' has been connected with multiple challenges for Muslim women including accessing mental health support, increased fear (Gilbert, Gilbert and Sanghera, 2004) as well as an 'unspoken cultural acceptance of domestic violence against women' (The Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2018, p.15). Therefore, both honour and stigma are entwined within a complex interplay between patriarchal and cultural norms (See Nagra, 2018). Whilst an individual can possess their own 'izzat' it is argued that a parents' or familial 'izzat' is created/obtained/enhanced 'if their sons and daughters heed the demands and stay within their domain' (Gilbert, Gilbert and Sanghera, 2009, p.117). However, 'izzat' in both an individual and collective sense is deeply subjective and interchangeable depending upon the 'complex set of rules' designed by those with the power to do so. In addition to notions of shame, stigma and discrimination, some Muslim women experience an additional and dominant layer of individual, familial and community 'izzat' within their desistance experience. This subsequently shapes the individualised nature of Muslim women's identities as they are better understood as having a collective identity (both culturally and religiously) which promotes an osmosis effect and the transference of shame within families, communities and could even have the potential to travel internationally to the home countries where extended family often reside.

Although academia is yet to provide an adequate platform for the voices of Muslim women leaving prison, specialist practitioner reports have provided a space to explore their needs in more depth. There have been three key practitioner-led reports outlining the multiple needs and vulnerabilities associated with Muslim women within the CJS (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014; Buncy and Ahmed, 2019; The Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2018). These reports by Buncy and Ahmed (2014; 2019) and The Barrow Cadbury Trust (2018) are discussed below.

Findings from Buncy and Ahmed (2014) suggest that faith is a significant part of Muslim women's identity and can be an empowering tool during desistance and or rehabilitation. There is a paucity of research exploring religious connections within desistance, yet what is available focuses on male experiences (Hallet and McCoy,

2014; Stansfield, 2017). There is an oversight within academic discussion, to understand a Muslim women's desistance experience, as well faith motivated desistance journeys and/or identity transformations. In addition, there is a need to consider Islamic concepts such as Tauba (repentance) and Mughfara (forgiveness) within the rehabilitation discussion (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019) due to the similarities in desistance theorising such as 'making good' and 'redemption narratives' (Maruna, 2001).

Further research by Buncy and Ahmed (2019, p.18), contextualised the 'interplay of cultural, faith, ethnicity and gender and institutional inequality dynamics and how these shape the provision of support (or lack of) in the CJS and post-release arena'. Further, the research captured Muslim women's experiences returning to the community as they came through the MWiP rehabilitation support programme. The findings of the report focus on issues such as the fragility of honour and Muslim women's criminality; how honour plays out in families and the community; the ripple effects of female incarceration on families and faith as a catalyst for rehabilitation and mental health. Additionally, the findings examined institutional inequalities in order to make recommendations in three key areas; community led action, agency based action and resource implications for specialist organisations. This 2019 report was unique in acknowledging four key areas of need for Muslim women leaving prison. Firstly, there is a cultural need which is closely connected to fear of familial shame and a fear of not being forgiven by her family or community. This can lead to the experience of violence and/or control within the family. In addition, it was acknowledged that Muslim women in prison have specific emotional needs relating to low levels of self-esteem, confidence and agency to move forward. The stigma and shame associated with the prison sentence can cause uncertain, fractured, severed, and or/controlled relationships within marriages and between mothers and their children. Thirdly, Muslim women experience structural inequalities within provision, as their resettlement needs are often neglected by prison and through-the-gate staff. This report outlines that Muslim woman feel staff hold subconscious racial and cultural biases which can result in staff feeling fearful of making mistakes. This ultimately impacts the quality of relationships between Muslim women and prison staff. Finally, Buncy and Ahmed (2019) suggest that the practical needs of Muslim women in prison are connected to family re-socialisation and restoration. Alternatively, some women may need to

relocate and require significant support in order to achieve this new identity in a new area. This suggested the need for increased culturally informed support which recognises the community and faith dynamics of Muslim women.

Many of these issues were also highlighted in findings from The Barrow Cadbury Trust (2018) who also shared concerns relating to the invisibility of Muslim women in prisons. This report argued that the neglect of Muslim women's needs, led to a lack of support with even the most basic prison tasks such as using the phones, ordering food, and filling out canteen sheets for extra items in prison. Moreover, the report outlined cultural taboos and rejection from the family, which can make the resettlement and ability to move on from crime for Muslim women even more challenging. In common with the other reports, it is argued that the legacy of life experience prior to prison, during prison and post-prison requires significant re-socialisation and re-building of self-esteem and confidence to nurture and develop key skills of Muslim women.

Collectively, these reports detail the unique position of Muslim women in prison and the subsequent invisibility of their experiences within policy, academia, and family/community discussions. In addition, the emerging recommendations from the reports echo shared and consistent concerns regarding the need for 'BAME' and faith specific community based desistance/resettlement support. This is something which the MWiP project attempts to address. The MWiP project is an award winning community-led provision which supports Muslim women to rebuild their lives after release from prison (Khidmat Centres, 2018). The Women's Centre 'Harmony Hub' at the MWiP project has been recognised as a good practice example in practitioner-led reports and policy papers (HMIP, 2021; Lammy, 2017; The Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2018)[5]. The project works in partnership with probation services in Bradford and offers a 'through the gate' service which supports women locally in New Hall and Askham Grange prisons. Staff at MWiP recognise that Muslim women experience and suffer from an intersectionality of issues which define their needs and experiences (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014). They are therefore able to sensitively assist clients with numerous

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[5] Please see both Harding (2021) and Ahearne (forthcoming) for further discussions regarding Women's Centres.

issues within a keyworker model. Buncy and Ahmed (2019) consider issues within the broadest societal context such as racism and islamophobia and how these impact on Muslim women's self-perception and fears circumventing them from moving on from crime and progressing. In addition, they also highlight challenges within the immediate context, for example how the family culture and social and patriarchal set-ups can suppress Muslim women's ambition and progress. As a result, Muslim women's lives are laden with expectations defined by patriarchal power plays, cultural norms and expectations which give rise to fixed perceptions on what they are and what they should be (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019). Therefore it is important that specialised services working with Muslim women across the CJS are aware of these complex and inter-related issues.

Summary

This chapter has considered the variety of ways in which Muslim women are further marginalised within academic, policy and feminist discussions. The review of the literature explored the way that collective understandings of 'BAME' experiences can reduce the visibility of minority groups and their associated needs. As a result, there is a need for specific focus to support a more diverse understanding of minority groups, culture and ethnicity across the CJS. It then outlined the multiple disadvantages, inequalities and gendered discrimination faced by Muslim women when they leave prison. The chapter emphasised the multi-faceted neglect of Muslim women's experiences, which in turn highlights the need for a platform of greater visibility, equality and understanding, in academia, policy and feminist discussions.

Within the academic context there are several issues that require attention.

Crucially, Muslim women's voices and experience of the CJS are not being heard, within available literature either in academic discussions more broadly, or within desistance theorising. This promotes a greater disconnect between the knowledge of practitioners and academics interested in minority groups' experience within the CJS. Additionally, the lack of academic recognition and discussion relating to Muslim women in prison's needs, further marginalises their experiences within a vast collection of largely westernised desistance theorising. Additionally, the literature has begun to develop nuances which examine 'BAME' experiences of desistance and

women's experiences of desistance, yet the two are yet to merge collectively within a theoretical discussion. This highlights a need for more inclusivity within feminist academic discourse. The lack of diversity within desistance and feminist scholarship has resulted in the domination of white and westernised experiences of desistance. Where feminist perspectives are taken, they lack diversity and discussions of faith and culture. This shapes the lack of understanding relating to the desistance needs of minority groups. Despite the lack of academic recognition of Muslim women's desistance needs, practitioner led research has attempted to highlight the challenges faced both within prison and resettlement within the community. This highlights the need for greater practitioner inclusion across academic discussions to enhance contemporary feminist understandings.

Secondly from a policy and practice perspective, there is a lack of discussion within policy to generate an interest in the unique needs of Muslim women and other minority groups' experiences of the CJS due to the continual use of the collective, yet reductive term 'BAME'. All of the varied and consistent neglect highlighted in this chapter further marginalises the experiences of minority groups within the CJS. This further impacts the pressure on service delivery more nationally for MWiP, due to the lack of alternative specialised services available to support Muslim women to move on from crime. However, the chapter indicated how culturally-informed services such as MWiP, can sensitively address and support the needs of Muslim women who leave prison, through their intensive and person-centred keyworker model.

In addition, within feminist discussions, the chapter identifies the significance of shame in the desistance narratives of women (Rutter and Barr, 2021; Sharpe, 2015). This highlights the crossover between women's experiences more generally within the CJS. However, for Muslim women, it has been argued that their ability to move on from crime is further compounded by multi-faceted shame, including cultural, familial and social pressures relating to honour and reputation (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019). Although the theoretical potential within desistance narratives is rich, there is a long road ahead to diversify academia's understanding of minority groups' desistance experience. Whilst Muslim women experience desistance in a unique, person-centred way, there are shared aspects which may be relevant to other minority groups. To

better support Muslim women to move on from crime, further scrutiny is required from academics, policy makers and practitioners.

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