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Do apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims?

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Table of Contents

Do apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims?	1
Project Proposal	3
Importance of the topic.	6
Research Question.	11
Proposed Methodology.....	12
References.	17
Ethics Approval Letter	31
Do apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims? ..	33
1. Introduction	34
2. Method.....	40
2.1 Sample and Procedure	40
3.1 The Modified version of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (mCTS; Straus et al., 1996)	42
3.2. Procedure	42
5. Results.....	43
5.1 Assault	45
5.2 Serious Assault.....	46
5.3 Psychological Abuse	47
5.4 Negotiation	48
5.5 Disclosure to the Police	48
6 Discussion	50
References	56
Appendices.....	63
<i>Appendix A- Tukey HSD post-hoc test for assault and birth religion .</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Appendix B- Tukey HSD post-hoc test for serious assault and birth religion</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Appendix C- Tukey HSD post-hoc test for psychological abuse and birth religion</i>	<i>63</i>
Executive Summary.	64
PowerPoint Presentation (Handouts)	70
Reflective report of Research Activities.....	72

Project Proposal

Overview of the area of interest.

Apostates are individuals raised within families when they identified as religious, but who currently disbelieve in the existence of god or gods, express a lack of belief in religion, and identify as non-religious (Hunsberger, 1983; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984). Believing in a religious faith typically follows matrilineal and/or patrilineal kinship, as people often abide by the religious faith observed by their family (Herzbrun, 1999). Herzbrun (1999) argues that an individual leaving their religious kinship occurs in three ways: firstly – children may have no genuine commitment to the religious belief or god; secondly – during adolescence, the childhood belief in religion is abandoned, as it is not palatable with a desire for adolescent freedom; and thirdly – if doubt and non-belief were present during childhood, non-belief is actively chosen in young adulthood. A dissatisfaction with the notion of god and further support of scientific inquiry are also common reasons for people disbelieving in god and religion (Fazzino, 2014; Wright, Giovanelli, Dolan, & Edwards, 2011). The transition from being religious to an apostate can be a difficult decision for people to make, particularly as religious affiliation may define their cultural identity and position within that community.

Apostates are cautious in identifying themselves publicly perhaps, due to fear of reprisal from friends and family, or inferences made in religious texts. This is because apostasy involves an individual renouncing their religion, and identifying as non-religious, atheist, humanist, secularist, or non-theist, opening the apostate to forms of discrimination, maltreatment and abuse within religiously-inclined households (Blanchard, 1991; Bottoms, Goodman, Tolou-Shams, Diviak & Shaver, 2015; Hammer, Cragun, Hwang, & Smith, 2012; Harper, 2007; Novšak, Mandelj, & Simonič, 2012; Regnerus & Burdette, 2006; Stewart, 2013; Simonič, Mandelj, & Novšak, 2013; Stokes & Regnerus, 2009; Weber, Pargament, Kunik, Lomax, & Stanley, 2012). This maltreatment may be due to negative impressions and interpretations presented in sacred religious texts about apostates.

The verses from Abrahamic religions (see appendices A and B) present apostates as an out-group for rejecting religious faith (Johnson, Rowatt & LaBouff, 2012; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, the recent incidents of Bangladeshi-born atheist-bloggers killed for questioning and implicating doubt into the public opinion of Islam, which consequently intimidated secularists in Bangladesh, and, as far as the proponents are concerned, can be traced to perspectives dictated within the Qur'an (BBC, 2015a; BBC 2015b; Burke, 2015; Devichand, 2015; Hammadi, 2015; Shackle, 2015). Hinduism also represents apostates negatively. Public perception persistently argues that Hinduism is just a way of life and

promotes individuality and independence of thought (Jaiswal, 1991; India Facts, 2014), whereas within the Vedas (the religious scriptures of Hinduism), the contrary is depicted (see appendix C). Perhaps, the verses of the Satyayaniya Upanishad are less well known to the lay individual; yet, in India, people are ostracised due to non-religious affiliation and rationalist thought. For example, the president of the Indian Rationalist Association - Sanal Edamaruku, travelled across India to debunk the superstitious behaviour perpetuated by religious priests, and because of this, is now in exile living in Finland, in fear for his life if he returns to India (Dissanayake, 2014; McDonald, 2012). Regardless of religious affiliation, the issue remains of incitement and moral neutralisation: in which people commit criminal acts by neutralising moral values within themselves (Sykes & Matza, 1957), and committing acts of violence and discrimination towards another person.

Persons in a family may disagree about ideology and belief, and often do. The question is fundamentally centred around ideological differences within households, for example whether one is religious or not, or whether one is politically inclined towards the Conservative or Labour party. Such ideological differences can create conflict, which can be resolved either through communication and a common understanding, or can sometimes lead to criminal behaviour involving intimidation and fear (Babu & Kar, 2009; Cline, 2015; Cooper, 2013; Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007; Gracia, 2004; Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Moylan, 2008; Holt, Buckley, &

Whelan, 2008; Koenig, Stephenson, Ahmed, Jejeebhoy, & Campbell, 2006; Richardson & Feder, 1996). It can be argued that apostates are hidden victims of a political crime, committed by individuals deciding their religious beliefs override the laws of a nation may believe they can commit a crime against an apostate so as they would be displaying virtue to their spiritual community. The current research seeks to estimate the hidden population of apostates living under such conditions.

Importance of the topic.

The number of people reporting to be religious in the UK is falling (Booth, 2012; The Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2012; ONS, 2013). The population of England and Wales in 2011 was 56.1 million, the population of people reporting they did not have a religion reached 14.1 million people (25.1% of the population) (ONS, 2013). In perspective, the largest majority (59.3%; 33.2 million people) of the population in England and Wales report themselves as Christian, whilst the second largest majority 4.8% (2.7 million people) of the population in England and Wales define themselves as Muslim (ONS, 2012). However, there has been a significant increase in people identifying as non-religious: in 2001 – 3,364,621 females and 4,344,646 males identified as non-religious, whereas in 2011 – 6,349,479 females and 7,747,750 males identified as non-religious, showing an increase of 88.71% in identification by females and a 78.33% increase in identification by males (ONS, 2013).

These statistics do not show the entire apostatic picture. Most non-religious persons were from a white background (13.1 million people; 93% ONS, 2013). This suggests that people of non-white backgrounds are assumed to be a deist, despite secular movements in those communities. Research into domestic violence and child abuse show that hidden populations experiencing these problems exist in many British ethnic minorities (Campbell, Sefl, Wasco, & Ahrens, 2004; Cavanagh, Dobash, & Dobash, 2007; Loseke & Kurz, 2005; McEvoy & McConnachie, 2012). There are likewise hidden populations of apostates in religious families (e.g., Sherkat, 1991).

Cognitions that justify a violent response to apostasy can be seen as a variant on the rationale used for 'honour killings'. Honour killings are carried out by people who believe transgressions of their social and spiritual norms will damage the honour of the family, community integrity, and the religion they fellow (Niaz, 2003). Transgressors are punished and victimised through means of fear, intimidation and violence, to maintain a traditional social identify within a secular, modern world that some persons may wish to join (Almosaed, 2004; Niaz, 2003; Smartt, 2006). The perpetuation of beliefs regarding female inferiority, characteristics of endogamy, male privilege and dominance, facilitated by classic patriarchy, perpetuates victims of honour killings within households (Dogan, 2013; Faqir, 2001; Sev'er, 2005). Due to the nature of honour killings, the number of persons (mostly assumed to be women) killed remains hidden from official

statistics. This is even more so for apostate victims of abuse within households (Smartt, 2006). Identifying hidden populations are difficult due to the size and boundaries of such populations being unknown, data gathering difficulties, and some persons being unwilling to cooperate due to potential stigmatisation within their own community if identified (Ellard-Gray, Jeffrey, Choubak, & Crann, 2015; Heckathorn, 1997; Pfeffer, 2015).

The emphasis on fear in relation to religion (Russell, 2004), is not irrational. Apprehension at leaving a religion, and the social and cultural pressures of doing so, are prominently expressed in personal blogs and discussion feeds, but have not been the subject of psychological academic research (Carlisle, 2013; "Is it Normal?", 2015; Quora, 2014; Tarico, 2015; Wright, n.d.). Arguably, some human beings live in states of fear and apprehension due to an inability to "come out" as non-religious, similar to how persons identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender may feel unable to openly identify with their sexuality without hostility or harm (Breshears & Braithwaite, 2014; Fruhauf, Orel & Jenkins, 2009; Goodrich, 2009; Rossi, 2010; Trussell, Xing & Oswald, 2015; Wisniewski, Robinson & Deluty, 2009). The invalidation of an individual's personal freedom to believe breaches the 1948 UN declaration of human rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

Living under threat in a household evokes various generic processes related to fear. Memories of abuse by a family member are an emotional

conditioned response, and are triggered by activity in the interoceptive insular cortex and amygdala, relate to higher executive cognitive functioning of emotion, memory, introspection, and attention, which are related to familial bonds and relationships (Casanova et al., 2016; Milad & Quirk, 2012). Apostates in such predicaments may learn helplessness and lack self-validation (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978; Diener & Dweck, 1980; Micari & Drane, 2011).

Within abusive households, social status and bellicose views may be related to the perception of fear towards victims of crime. This is because intimidation (an impression management tactic to present and signal an individual's power, to gain behavioural compliance in creating a desired image, in the minds and eyes of others (Boling & Turnley, 1999, 2003a, 2003b; Harris, Kacmar, Ziyuska & Shaw, 2007; Whitaker & Dahling, 2013)) is explicit in threats to kill the victim. Fear and intimidation help conserve a society's traditionalist and cultural values should alternative, secular ideological views and values challenge and threaten the values of the community.

Male relatives who abuse victims within households in the name of religion, are more likely to hold socially accepted feelings of power within the household (Lee, Walters, Hall, & Basile, 2013). Similarly, parents that commit honour killings of their children carry this out as they are perceived to bring shame and dishonour on their families (Gill & Brah, 2013). Like

many troubled or abusive homes, despite being under threat and in conflict, people continue to love and need their families, and may have nowhere else to go. Fear of abandonment, being ostracised either by wider society, or by individuals that have a social standing within the community, further perpetuates the difficulty people may have identifying as non-religious within religious families, as it is difficult not to conform with the majority (Asch, 1956).

How can hidden apostates and victims be reached? The Internet is a source where many hidden populations can be more open, and provided with information without the fear of being caught out by their families or community. The safety of victims is paramount in this study, and online questionnaires provide victims with the safety of completing the questionnaire without putting themselves at risk of harm (Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze & Chachanidze, 2010; Mirrlees-Black, 1999; SAMHSA, 2004; Smith & Denton, 2004). Online questionnaires have advantages over traditional questionnaire methods in relation to cost, speed, appearance, flexibility, functionality, usability, and with the ability to reach more people in comparison to traditional forms of questionnaires (Bandilla, Bosnjak & Altdorfer, 2003; Kwak & Radler, 2002; Lumsden, 2005). Online questionnaires provide a reminder if participants fail to answer a question, therefore reducing errors or problems associated with missing data (Lumsden, 2005). Completion of online questionnaires also ensures anonymity to participants, which and in the current study is

essential for participant safety. A brief survey can usefully examine the experience of difficulties persons within households may have in the name of religion, and whether this shares characteristics with domestic victimisation in the abuse of power and control over a person's views, but using the rationale of religion, custom, and tradition (Grose & Grabe, 2014). An adapted version of the revised conflict tactics scale (Straus, 1979; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), often used to examine intimate partner violence, will be used as a standardised questionnaire for participants to complete assessing such abuse.

Research Question.

This study seeks to investigate and raise awareness of the experience of apostates within religious families, and whether this has implications for the criminal justice system. It is hypothesised that some apostates and apostatics are victims of abuse within religious households, and that these offences are rarely reported. It is further hypothesised that people identifying as religious are less likely to report crimes that have occurred to them. The aim of this investigation is to identify a hidden population known to be victims of abuse, the nature of this population with regard to gender, the nature of any assailant, and to assert the levels of abuse, fear and intimidation involved.

Proposed Methodology

a) Sample

The sample in this study will be recruited opportunistically from the general population with the link of the study being hosted by different organisations, aiming to identify whether crimes are being committed against people identifying as religious and as apostates. This form of recruitment ensures a diverse selection of the general population is enlisted. Questionnaires will be answered anonymously with participants completing the consent form before taking part in the study. To investigate this new and complex area, efforts will be made to sample the population broadly. This study aims to identify the cultural complexities in relation to whether unprosecuted crimes are occurring due to matrilineal and/or patrilineal kinship: whether the individual is religious, non-religious or an overt and covert apostate.

b) Procedure

I have contacted the [British Humanist Association \(BHA\)](#), [Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain](#), the [Peter Tatchell Foundation](#), the [Gesher Foundation](#) and "[Faith to Faithless](#)" to ask if they would help facilitate the collection of data for this questionnaire by hosting a link to the questionnaire. They have agreed to provide support by hosting the link to the online questionnaire. In addition, my working closely with organisations such as Faith to Faithless and the BHA, emphasises the need to support victims of unreported crime, and the opportunity to distribute the questionnaire to reach more people. Faith to Faithless have advised that they are in conversations with

anonymous, hidden populations of apostates, in which this questionnaire can be distributed to. In addition, organisations such as the Geshar Foundation, Faith to Faithless and the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain are sources to reach believers, either who are victims of crime, or who may have had disagreements, fears, or questions about their faith.

Assessments and questionnaires

The revised conflict tactics scale (rCTS) measures the extent to which people engage in psychological and physical attacks on each other and their ability to reason or negotiate in dealing with conflicts (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). A major theoretical basis of rCTS is conflict theory. Newton, Connelly, and Landsverk (2001) argue that all human association is effected by conflict in one way or another, and without conflict, social groups fail to adapt to changes in circumstances and conversely lose their associative strength. Conflict is an unavoidable tactic, used by individuals to reach a resolution for their own personal interests, which occurs at all levels of social functioning (Newton, Connelly, & Landsverk, 2001). This study aims to use the rCTS to understand conflict within households, in comparison to looking at partner violence and conflict. The five constructs within the rCTS: physical assault, physical injury, psychological aggression, sexual coercion and negotiation have high alpha coefficients of internal consistency amongst males and females. Cronbach's alphas amongst males and females were: .93 and .86 for physical assault, .92 and .87 for physical injury, .78 and .72 for psychological aggression

and .88 and .87 for negotiation (Straus, 2004). The risk to participants completing this survey is an important consideration, and in accordance with Straus (2004), the sexual coercion construct has been removed from the survey, as it does not affect the validity and reliability of the survey (Straus & Mickey, 2012).

c) Ethical Considerations

General

The aim of this study is to identify victims, whether as overt or covert apostates, or religious believers, of unreported crime within religious households. The information sheet and consent form aims to ensure participants are not deceived, and that participation in this study is voluntary. Furthermore, the data provided by participants' will be treated in the strictest confidence to ensure participants are not identifiable.

Consent

Each questionnaire page is preceded by an on-line consent form outlining the premise of the survey. Children under 18 are excluded from the study. This study involves no deception.

Withdrawal from Research Study

Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw their data from the study. Participants will be asked to provide answers to two questions: what is the name of the street you lived on as a child of 10 years, and what is your current favourite ice-cream flavour, as a unique identifier to maintain anonymity, and are able to withdraw from the research study by quoting their answers via email, to the researcher.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Information given by participants is confidential, and minimal unique personal indentifying information is gathered.

Debriefing

After completion of the questionnaire, participants will be given a debrief screen with contact details of the investigator. There will be an option for the participant to save a PDF copy of their answers and debrief form. Persons will be also given information on support agencies and charities for all participants.

Protection of Participants

Although persons are self-reporting about personal experiences, their risk of physical or mental harm is minimal, as participants' risk of harm is reduced due to this being an online questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, participants will also be made aware of using the 'Private' function on their web-browser to reduce their risk of harm.

Giving advice and Evidence of Crime

It is possible that participants may disclose a serious criminal offence as a victim or as an offender (violence, sexual, or domestic violence for example). In the consent form there will be a section explaining the processes in relation to disclosing serious criminal offences: that good professional practice will be adhered to. Furthermore, the supervisor will be informed and due action will be taken.

a) Expected Outcome

The expected outcome of this study is to raise awareness of the risk of abuse in religious families by reference to the incidence and nature of such abuse on persons who do not share the belief.

b) Staffing issues/ equipment/ timetabling

There will be no special staffing or equipment needed.

c) Design and analytical techniques to be used

The data collected for people identifying either as religious or as apostates will be compared using descriptives, means and frequency comparisons. A X^2 test will be used to compare categorical information between people identifying as apostates or religious in relation to being victims of faith-based crime, between faiths, and in relation to assailants committing any offence. A MANOVA will compare means for the rCTS across apostates and believers, and across faiths.

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Appendix A – Bible Versus relating to Apostasy

Bible (Deuteronomy 13: 6-11, King James Version) specifies:

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend... saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known... Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Appendix B – Qur’anic verses relating to Apostasy

In accordance to the Abhramaic religions, the Qur’an 2:217 specifies:

And whoever of you reverts from his religion [to disbelief] and dies while he is a disbeliever - for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire, they will abide therein eternally.

Furthermore, the Qur’an 4:89 states:

They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved so you would be alike. So do not take from among them allies until they emigrate for the cause of Allah. But if they turn away, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take not from among them any ally or helper.

Appendix C – Upanishad verses, within Hinduism, relating to Apostasy

The Satyayaniya Upanishad (329-330) specifies:

Then indeed, Oh Brahman, he who abandons this asceticism which is the highest spiritual life, becomes a child-murderer, a murderer of a Brahmana, a killer of an embryo, a great sinner. He, who abandons this steady life pertaining to Vishnu (i.e. the external and internal discipline in spiritual life), becomes a thief, a seducer of his preceptor's wife, treacherous to a friend, ungrateful; he is denied all (auspicious) worlds. This has been declared in the Vedic verse – A thief, a drinker of spirituous liquor, a seducer of his preceptor's wife and one treacherous to his friend get purified by expiation; (but) one who abandons the sign of Vishnu, external or internal, which he was possessing, will never be purified in spite of all his self-exertions.

Abandoning the sign of Vishnu-worship, external or internal, he who resorts to his stage of life or no (prescribed) stage at all, or returns (to his former way of living prior to renunciation) – to that great fool (and to people of his kind) there is no liberation seen even in tens of millions of eons.

Ethics Approval Letter



Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

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17th February 2016

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Dear Hari

Ethics Reference No: N16022016 SoM – **please always quote**
Study Title: Do apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims?
Chief Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Vince Egan, Associate Professor, CFFP, Psychiatry and Applied Psychology, School of Medicine
Lead Investigators/student: Hari Parekh, MSc Forensic and Criminological Psychology Student, School of Medicine
Type of Study: MSc project, Online Survey
Proposed Start Date: 29/01/2016 **Proposed End Date:** 29/03/16
No of Subjects: 200+ **Age:** 18+yrs

Thank you for submitting this interesting application which was reviewed on 16th February 2016 and the following documents were received:

Representing populations of hidden abuse victims:

- FMHS Research Ethics Application form, Date: 26/01/2016
- Project Proposal
- Draft text for advert 26/01/2016
- E-mails of permission/support from Host organisations: BHA 28/10/2015 Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain 02/11/2015, Geshar Foundation 28/10/2015.
- Participant Information Sheet, 26.01.2016
- Consent Form, 26.01.2016
- Online Survey 26.01.2016
- Debrief Sheet, 19.01.2016

These have been reviewed and are satisfactory and the study has been given a favourable opinion.

There was one minor change to the Information sheet and that it is to update the following sentence to read: This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (please quote FMHS REC ref N16022016).

A favourable opinion is given on the understanding that the conditions set out below are followed:

1. You must follow the protocol agreed and inform the Committee of any changes using a notification of amendment form (please request a form).
2. You must notify the Chair of any serious or unexpected event.
3. This study is approved for the period of active recruitment requested. The Committee also provides a further 5 year approval for any necessary work to be performed on the study which may arise in the process of publication and peer review.
4. An End of Project Progress Report is completed and returned when the study has finished (Please request a form).

Yours sincerely



Professor Ravi Mahajan
Chair, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Do apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims?

Abstract

Apostates are individuals raised within religious families, having identified as religious yet, currently disbelieve in the existence of God, or Gods, with a lack of belief in religion, and currently identify as non-religious. Given the strong feelings families can have about the rejection of their faith, this study sought to examine how abusive this could be for the apostate, expecting that apostates represent hidden population of abuse victims within religious households. 228 persons (102 Male: 119 Female) were recruited from an online survey with the support of Faith to Faithless and were screened using the modified conflict tactics scale to quantify experience of assault, serious assault, psychological abuse and negotiation.

Keywords: apostate, victim, abuse, hidden population

1. Introduction

Apostates are individuals raised within religious families who once identified as religious but currently disbelieve in the existence of God, or gods, cease to have religious belief and who consequently identify as non-religious (Hunsberger, 1983; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984). A religious faith is often adopted due to a person's maternal and paternal bloodline, as people often abide by the religious faith observed by their family (Herzbrun, 1999). Herzbrun (1999) further argues that three factors are involved in an individual leaving their religious bloodline: firstly, non-belief in childhood - children having no commitment to religious belief or God. Secondly, discarding childhood beliefs in adolescence - having believed in religious traditions as a child, a person finds these beliefs untenable to adolescent life. Thirdly, non-belief actively chosen over belief in young adulthood, where doubt and belief were both present during childhood and adolescence until adulthood. For example, a dissatisfaction with the notion of a God and organised religion, and for the furthering development of scientific inquiry free of supernatural restrictions, may be coherent reasons for people to disbelieve in God and religion (Fazzino, 2014; Wright, Giovanelli, Dolan, & Edwards, 2011). The transition from being religious to an apostate can be a difficult decision for people to make, as it may involve rejecting one's own family and their culture.

Disagreement over values in families often causes conflict, and some belief systems are more rigid about apostasy than others, although the predicament of apostates often goes unnoticed, some have been subject to assault, death threats and murder. The issues that victims of domestic violence, and people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) face as a hidden population of victims may be similar to the issues faced by apostates (Fassinger, 1991; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999; Richardson & Feder, 1996; Roberts, Williams, Lawrence, & Raphael, 1999). Apostates and people identifying as non-religious (e.g., atheist, humanist, secularist, or non-theist) may also be susceptible to similar forms of discrimination, maltreatment, and abuse within religiously inclined households (Blanchard, 1991; Bottoms, Goodman, Tolou-Shams, Diviak & Shaver, 2015; Hammer, Cragun, Hwang, & Smith, 2012; Harper, 2007; Novšak, Mandelj, & Simonič, 2012; Regnerus & Burdette, 2006; Stewart, 2013; Simonič, Mandelj, & Novšak, 2013; Stokes & Regnerus, 2009; Weber, Pargament, Kunik, Lomax, & Stanley, 2012). The aim of this current study is to formally examine the abuse that apostates may face within religious households.

One issue is the under-reporting of the phenomena. Within religious households, apostates may face abuse due to prejudiced in-group favouritism of religious views as compared to a non-religious out-group (Johnson, Rowatt & LaBouff, 2012; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The doctrines within Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

fail to acknowledge and support the plight of apostates. First, the Torah states a person who has become estranged from his Father in heaven, cannot be part of the Jewish community (The Torah, Exodus. 12:43); second, Matthew in the New Testament explains that children should honour their parents, and anyone who fails to do so, should be put to death (Matthew 15: 1-9 New International Version); and third, the Qur'an states that people who reject faith, by turning their backs on Islam, should be killed (The Qur'an, 4:89). There is an increased likelihood that when a threat is facilitated by force, and the victim believes they will be a victim, this can be an intimidating experience (Littleton, Buck, Rosman & Grills-Taquechel, 2012). Similar to the plight of victims of domestic violence, the lack of reporting amongst apostates may be due to their fear of further psychological and physical abuse, whilst upset families may rationalise their actions behind the ideology of religion, culture, and tradition (Babu & Kar, 2009; Koenig, Stephenson, Ahmed, Jejeebhoy & Campbell, 2006; Richardson & Feder, 1996). The abuse encountered by young people who decide to leave their religious faith may be detrimental to their psychological and physical health (Cline, 2015; Cooper, 2013; Gewirtz & Edleson, 2007; Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl & Moylan, 2008; Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008). This further suggests that apostates abused within religious households may be more likely to represent a hidden population of abuse.

In the UK, the number of people identifying as religious is falling (Booth, 2012; Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2012; ONS, 2013). Utilising the representative data from the census, the population of England and Wales in 2011 was 56.1 million, with 6.4 million more people reporting as non-religious (ONS, 2013). Of these, the largest majority of the population in England and Wales (59.3%;33.2 million people) report themselves Christian – while the second largest majority (4.8%, 2.7 million people) of the population report as Muslim (ONS, 2012). In 2011 25.1% (14.1 million people) of the population reported being non-religious: this is an increase of 10.3% from 14.8% of the population in 2001 (ONS, 2012). Of the individuals reporting as non-religious, four in ten people identifying as non-religious (39%) are aged under twenty-five, and over four in five (82%) are aged under fifty (ONS, 2013). There was a further rise of 637,000 people identifying as non-religious in the age range of twenty to twenty-four, and a rise of 620,000 people identifying as non-religious at age forty-four (ONS, 2013). The rise of people reporting as non-religious furthers the need to investigate hidden populations of apostates within religious households.

The statistics fail to portray the actuality of apostasy, which is often thought of as a construct most relevant to BAME populations. Most (13.1 million people, 93%) who identify as non-religious are from a white ethnic background (ONS, 2013). These statistics do not include the number of people living in religious families identifying as non-religious, nor

acknowledge the number of people identifying as non-religious within BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic) communities. The under-reporting of apostates in BAME communities and religious households in similarity to earlier domestic violence and child abuse research, shows that hidden populations of victims exist, which raises issues concerning the plight of hidden populations of apostates within religious households (Campbell, Sefl, Wasco, & Ahrens, 2004; Sherkat, 1991). The under-reporting of apostates within religious households may be due to fear of breaching sanctions against apostasy and as such, the population of apostates remains hidden due to the lack of public acknowledgment and awareness of the population existing (Heckathorn, 1997). With the likelihood of apostates tolerating such abuse, further increasing their status as a hidden population (Ogland, Xu, Bartkowski & Ogland, 2014). The further failure to protect apostate victims from abuse originate from the conventional values and social norms that facilitate abuse to occur within the private household (Devers & Bacon, 2010).

Russell (2004) emphasises that fear is not irrational. Fear of overtly leaving religion may not be well documented within the academic literature, but fear of religious, social and cultural pressures are, and are prominently documented in blogs on the internet (Carlisle, 2013; Is it Normal?, 2015; Quora, 2014; Tarico, 2015; Wright, n.d.). Human beings living in states of fear and apprehension of "coming out" as non-religious to their religious family, and fearful of violence committed within a belief in "honour crimes"

are likely to be in a similar situation that people identifying as LGBT may face in openly identifying their sexuality (Breshears & Braithwaite, 2014; Fruhauf, Orel & Jenkins, 2009; Goodrich, 2009; Rossi, 2010; Trussell, Xing & Oswald, 2015; Wisniewski, Robinson & Deluty, 2009). Official statistics may under-represent the non-religious population due to hidden populations of victims who are not measured in the statistics. Fears of abandonment, threats of physical and psychological abuse, and being ostracised by their community are good reasons why people are less likely to publically identify as non-religious within religious households and their broader community.

Victims of abuse in hidden populations are less likely to report their abuse to the police. For example, historically female victims of rape were less likely to report their abuse, specifically when they are abused by men, or people they know at home or within a social setting, which may cause the victim to question and doubt their role and responsibility in the abuse (Williams, 1984). Previous research on domestic violence also highlights the issues surrounding the difficulties of detecting victims, due to the complex and complicated nature of social, cultural, and (perhaps) marital factors involved in the abuse of a victim, which may further concentrate on the victim's inability to make themselves known as victims of crime (Richardson & Feder, 1996). There still remains a deficit in the current knowledge, comprehension and discourse around whom the victims of domestic abuse are, and how victims interact with the criminal justice

system (MacQueen & Norris, 2016), particularly if it is believed the matter should be resolved within its own community, as domestic and child abuse once was (Gangoli & Rew, 2011).

The present study was designed to assess whether apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims within religious households. A modified version of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale was used to formally measure the extent to which a person's family may engage in psychological and physical attacks on the victim (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). It was predicted that persons identifying as apostates would report a significant level of serious assault and psychological abuse which would not be reported to the authorities, enabling familial violence to maintain, and placing individual human rights at risk. It was predicted that an ideology which justified violence to apostates would lead to more apostates being victimised within that community, and to a more serious degree. Results were examined in relation to birth-faith and care-seeking.

2. Method

2.1 Sample and Procedure

The sample in the study were recruited opportunistically, with the support of the organisation "Faith to Faithless", from the general population. Faith to Faithless support hidden populations of apostates on online forums such as their online Facebook page, from which the majority of participants were recruited for this survey (<http://bit.ly/29D04zG>). This meant that not all

participants were in direct contact with the researcher. Two hundred and twenty-nine persons were recruited, with one participant removed from analysis due to not providing answers to the questions in the survey. Two hundred and twenty-eight persons' data were analysed, their mean age being 30 (SD = 10.69); of the cohort, 52% (N = 119) were female, 45% (N = 102) were male, and 3% (N = 7) who reported non-binary gender (e.g., identifying as bisexual, pansexual or asexual). Regarding ethnicity, 59% of the cohort identified as White (N = 134), 20% identified as Asian/Asian British (N = 46), 11% identified as Other (N = 25), comprising of people identifying as Arab, Arab-Australian, Australian, British-Iraqi, Brown, Canadian-Indian, Ethiopian-Australian, Lebanese-Australian, Palestinian, American-Indian, Romani, Middle-Eastern, and Iraqi, 6% identified as Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups (N = 13), and 4% identified as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (N = 10). Regarding sexuality, participants identified as 66% Heterosexual (N = 150), 17% Bisexual (N = 39), 11% Homosexual (N = 25), 3% Other (N = 7), 3% Pansexual (N = 6), and 0.44% Asexual (N = 1). Questionnaires were answered anonymously and participants completed a consent form before taking part in the study.

3. Measures

3.1 The Modified version of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (mCTS; Straus et al., 1996)

The mCTS is a modification of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The CTS measures the extent to which people in a relationship engage in psychological and physical attacks on each other, and the reasoning or negotiation used to deal with conflicts, and consequently the authors use the term 'my partner' to highlight abuse committed by the partner to the victim (Straus et al., 1996: 311-312). The mCTS however, replaces the 'my partner' term by using the term 'my family' instead to highlight abuse committed by the family to the victim. In addition, 16 items of the CTS referring to sexual violence were removed in the mCTS (e.g., 'I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex' (Straus et al., 1996: 312).

3.2. Procedure

This survey was predominantly distributed via the organisation Faith to Faithless, whom currently support hidden populations of apostates throughout the world. With their support, this survey was distributed via their Facebook page from which the majority of participants were recruited for the survey. Participants filled out a consent form before taking part in the study. Participants were provided with a debrief signposting them to charities that support victims of domestic abuse.

4. Statistical analysis

Statistical relationships were calculated based on the mCTS scores and questions within the survey. The reliability of these measures was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Differences between groups were calculated using univariate analysis, and sought to see if people were victimised due to their lack of religious belief within religious households. A higher score on any of the mCTS dimensions indicates a greater magnitude of abuse being inflicted.

5. Results

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and reliabilities of scales used in study

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's a
Assault	3.26	3.54	0.91
Serious Assault	1.07	2.01	0.87
Psychological Abuse	3.02	1.75	0.74
Negotiation	4.68	1.85	0.68

The mCTS (as included in the original CTS), consists of focussing on the attitudes towards assault, serious assault, psychological abuse, and negotiation in relation to conflicts between family members and the victim (Straus et al., 1996). Table 1 presents means, standard deviations and internal reliabilities for measures used in the study. Table 1 shows the mCTS has a high level of internal consistency for all subscales here.

Table 2
 Comparison of people (n) being born into a religious faith, and whether they currently identify as religious.

	Birth	Current
Christian	130	12
Muslim	68	4
No Religion	18	204
Hindu	9	2
Jewish	3	1
Other	0	5

Table 2 presents a comparison between the number of people who were religious or non-religious from birth, and the number of people that are religious or non-religious currently. The study comprised of two hundred and twenty-nine participants, with the study focussing on non-religious people who were brought up in either a Christian, Muslim, or non-religious household; only a few participants identified as being part of Hindu, Jewish, and Sikh religious groups or families since birth. The largest cohort in the study were from people identifying as Christian from birth (N = 130), who produced the largest reduction in religiousness currently (N = 12), showing a 90% reduction in the number of people identifying as Christian currently. People identifying as Muslim from birth (N = 68) saw a reduction in people currently identifying as Muslim (N = 4), showing a 94% reduction in the number of people identifying as Muslim currently. However, the greatest difference is between the number of people identifying as non-religious from birth (N = 18), to the number of people currently identifying as non-

religious (N = 204), showing a 1,033% increase in the number of people identifying as non-religious currently.

Table 3

F-Ratios for one-way ANOVA, dividing the sample between non-religious, Christian, and Muslim from birth

	Non-Religious	Christian	Muslim	F Ratio
Assault	1.00	2.64	4.90	6.17
Serious Assault	0.22	0.66	2.03	5.25
Psychological Abuse	2.61	2.78	3.57	3.48
Negotiation	4.50	4.99	4.41	2.76

5.1 Assault

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted on the main effects between birth religion and assault, yielded an F ratio of $F(5, 222) = 6.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = 1$, indicated a significant difference, and a large effect size, between participants identified at birth, as non-religious (M = 1.00, SD = 1.94), Christian (M = 2.64, SD = 3.03), and Muslim (M = 4.90, SD = 4.05), in relation to assault. People born Muslim from birth were more likely to be victim of assault, followed by people born as Christians, with people identifying as non-religious from birth being the least likely to be victim of assault. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test, for people identifying their religion at birth in relation to assault shows that, people who identified as non-religious significantly differed to people that identified

as Muslim (appendix A). In addition, the mean score for people who identified as Christian further significantly differed to people that identified as Muslim (appendix A). However, people that identified as non-religious did not significantly differ from people who identified as Christian (see appendix 1.1). Taken together, these results further indicate that being part of a Muslim household at birth increases the likelihood of being victim to assault.

However, a similar one-way analysis of variance was conducted on the main effects between current religion and assault, yielded an F ratio of $F(5, 222) = 1.55, p = 1.75, \eta^2 = 1$, indicating no significant difference, despite a large effect size, between participants identifying their current religious affiliation, as non-religious ($M = 3.28, SD = 3.57$), Christian ($M = 2.42, SD = 3.06$), and Muslim ($M = 2.25, SD = 3.86$), in relation to assault. This finding indicates that there is no significant difference in relation to assault and their current religious affiliation.

5.2 Serious Assault

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted on the main effects between birth religion and serious assault, yielded an F ratio of $F(5, 222) = 5.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = 1$, indicating a significant difference, and a large effect size, between participants identifying at birth, as non-religious ($M = 0.22, SD = 0.73$), Christian ($M = 0.66, SD = 1.43$), and Muslim ($M = 2.03, SD = 2.79$), in relation to serious assault. This result finds that there is a significant

difference between the religious identity of participants from birth in relation to serious assault, and that people identifying as Muslim from birth are more likely to be victim of serious assault, followed by people identifying as Christian from birth, with people identifying as non-religious from birth being the least likely to be victim of serious assault from birth. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test, for people currently identifying their religion in relation to serious assault shows that, people who identified as non-religious significantly differed to people that identified as Muslim (appendix B). In addition, the mean score for people that identified as Christian further significantly differed to people that identified as Muslim (appendix B). However, people that identified as non-religious did not significantly differ from people that identified as Christian (appendix B). Taken together, these results further indicate that currently being part of a Muslim household increases the likelihood of being victim to serious assault.

5.3 Psychological Abuse

Analysis of variance was conducted on the main effects between birth religion and serious assault, yielded an F ratio of $F(5, 222) = 3.48, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 1$, indicating a significant difference, and a large effect size, between participants identifying at birth, as non-religious ($M = 2.61, SD = 1.50$), Christian ($M = 2.78, SD = 1.74$), and Muslim ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.68$). This proposes that there is a significant difference between the religious identities of participants from birth in relation to psychological abuse. Post

hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test, for people identifying their religion at birth in relation to psychological abuse shows that, people who identified as Christian significantly differed to people that identified as Muslim (appendix C). However, people that identified as non-religious did not significantly differ from people who identified as Christian and Muslim (appendix C). Taken together, these results indicate that being part of a Christian household at birth increases the likelihood of being victim to psychological abuse.

5.4 Negotiation

An analysis of variance was conducted on the main effects between birth religion and negotiation, which yielded an F ratio of $F(5, 222) = 2.76$, $p = 0.19$, $\eta^2 = 1$, indicating no significant difference, despite a large effect size between participants identifying at birth, as non-religious ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.72$), Christian ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.68$), and Muslim ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 2.08$). This proposes that there is no significant difference between the religious identity of participants from birth in relation to family negotiation.

5.5 Disclosure to the Police

Out of 154 persons assaulted, only 9 reported their assault to the Police. Five assailants were given a warning. One was charged. 71 participants disclosed reasons as to why they did not disclose their abuse, first, 44% ($N = 31$) participants who believe disclosure would be disrespectful to their

family dynamic and would be perceived as a betrayal of their family and community.

A participant said:

Many reasons, not always all at once: I was not aware I could; I was too scared to do so; I did not think I would be believed; I knew people who would defend my assailant at all costs; and I knew I would be a pariah in my community.

Second, 27% (N = 19) participants who believe that the police would be unable to support them with a lack of trust in whether the police can support them appropriately.

A participant said:

This is something that culturally I couldn't cross. It was taught that getting the "western" system involved with family affairs was wrong, and I cared enough about my family members not to put them in jail.

Third, 25% (N = 18) participants being fearful of the repercussions of disclosing their assault by identifying as non-religious.

A participant said:

Many reasons, not always all at once: I was not aware I could; I was too scared to do so; I did not think I would be believed; I knew people who would defend my assailant at all costs; and I knew I would be a pariah in my community.

6 Discussion

The current study examined whether apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims and how much they had experienced assault, serious assault, psychological abuse, or had families which sought to negotiate their differences. The study shows a reduction in the affiliation between the religious identity that participants were born into, with an increase in identifying as non-religious currently; with a reduction of 90% not identifying as Christian currently, and 94% not identifying as Muslim currently. Moreover, with an increase of 1,033% of people not identifying as religious currently, emphasises the view that apostates exist; people are less likely to identify as religious after childhood into adulthood, and apostates should consequently not be categorised as 'nones' within society (Hadaway, 1989). With Faith to Faithless distributing the survey, this may have produced higher level of apostates suffering from abuse than the general population. Therefore, apostates may represent a hidden population of people.

It was found that people identifying as being from a Muslim background, had a higher likelihood of being victim to assault and serious assault, including psychological abuse. The cultural complexities within Asian households specifically, may play precedent in this occurrence. The patriarchal, hierarchical, and traditionalistic dependency to maintain izzat (respect) within the household and community, is the foundation of the Asian families across Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities (Ballard, 1982).

Furthermore, izzat has become systematically maintained to ensure that communities, families and individuals fail to question the boundaries and beliefs set by religious and cultural institutions, by allowing an institutional mechanism to shame those that do, and those that fail to maintain the traditionalist, cultural and religious boundaries in how they live their life (Gilbert, Gilbert & Sanghera, 2004). It is further emphasised that any deviation from the ideal norms of the cultural homeland must be the first step to snowball towards westernised Anglicisation (Ballard, 1982; Hayes, Freilich & Chermak, 2016), making *izzat* an important part of maintaining a distinct cultural identity. The issue arises that even a slight lapse in faithfulness towards the household, culture, and affiliation with restrictions by religion may contribute to indicate total disloyalty to the family, and a tarnish on the izzat developed and maintained by the family amongst their community (Ballard, 1982; Hayes et al., 1982), thus furthering the likelihood of being a victim of assault and serious assault, especially when identifying as non-religious.

Psychological abuse is damaging to the psychological welfare of children and young people. Religious beliefs have the propensity to promote human welfare by emphasising the need for a progressive moral compass, yet religious beliefs also have the propensity to foster and facilitate abusive behaviour within family life (Simonič, Mandelj & Novsak, 2013). The fundamental premise within organised religion emphasises the spiritual necessity for young people to obey authority figures, and encourages

parents to ensure their children comply to authority and religious dictation (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar & Swank, 2008). Furthermore, the reinforcement of personal guilt and responsibility within cultural-traditionalistic households, furthers the detrimental consequences that may inhibit the disclosure of abuse within religious households (Redmond, 1989). Additionally, the emotional significance of adolescence, and the means in which power and control may be exercised over young people within organised religions, may cause further psychological implications for young people (Burke, 2001; Miller, 1990). This may support the view of why there was significant difference between people affiliating as Christian and Muslim, in relation to psychological abuse.

The Human Rights Act (1998) specifically aims to protect all members under the state of law, however, identifying as non-religious may cause a person to become a victim of assault and serious assault, with no community protection possible to defend the person. This further isolates and inhibits victims openly identifying as non-religious due to such threats. The law is currently more attuned to the needs and plight of victims of domestic violence (Turner et al., 2015). However, in relation to the plight of non-religious victims within religious households, the law remains tentative due to the cultural complexities that exist (Goldfarb, 2007), perchance due to victims not warranting enough attraction to the abuse in question. This study however shows that victims remain conflicted between whether the police can comprehend the complexities that apostate victims

face, and the harm that disclosure may cause to the izzat of the family, within the community. This study identified a 1,033% increase in people currently identifying as non-religious, which strengthens the view for an ideological shift away from the xenophobia of the unknown relating to identifying as non-religious, where assault and abuse should not remain the normative behaviour to tackle the lack of association with the in-group's religious ideology (Tajfel, 1982). This strengthens the view that the law, despite aiming to protect all members under the state of law, may be confused as to how the law can be enforced pragmatically to support hidden populations of apostate victims.

The incredulous issue of hidden populations, is the consistent cycle relating to their hidden stature. The lack of disclosure relating to the issues faced by apostate-victims further inhibits the opportunity for their issues to be known within society. This study has shown that out of 154 persons assaulted, only one assailant was charged, with the majority believing their disclosure would harm their relationship with their family, that the police would not comprehend their issues, and feeling fearful of the repercussions of openly identifying as non-religious. The most significant concern for a victim, is the perpetrator, when making a decision to disclose their abuse (Gill, 2004). Collins and Miller (1994) argue that victims are more likely to disclose their abuse to people whom they initially like, yet, if victims are not comfortable with disclosing their abuse to police officers, this leaves victims disenfranchised with reporting their abuse (Brown & Reed Benedict,

2002), furthering the lack of disclosure of this hidden population. Moreover, this may snowball into the victim perceiving that police officers may be unable to comprehend the complexities relating to why disclosing their abuse may be detrimental to their family, community, and social life. Disclosing abuse requires the recipient to comprehend the issues of the victim.

Highlighting the increase in people identifying as non-religious currently has important implications for future research. This study furthers the development to work with criminal justice agencies, such as the police and courts, to increase awareness of the existence of apostate-abuse amongst the general public, and devise strategies on how victims of abuse can be supported; in similarity to the support that victims of domestic violence are currently receiving (Sherman, Smith, Schmidt & Rogan, 1992). Future changes to this study would emphasise the sensitive nature of this study due to participants mentioning suffering flashbacks of abuse as a result of completing the survey.

One limitation of this study is the low number of people identifying as other religious groups (Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and Sikh), which inhibited their inclusion within inferential analyses. This created a functional bottleneck for this study, hence enabling participants identifying as Christian, Muslim, or having no-religion to be part of the analyses. This may have affected the current analyses, by inhibiting the number of people that may have

identified as an apostate within the survey, or exaggerating effects attributable to Muslims, when similar findings may be possible for any culture underpinned by *izzit* values. The addition of the mCTS in the survey strongly operationalises abusive experiences, but unfortunately increases the likelihood for victims of abuse to have specific flashbacks and remembrances of past abuse. Further research is needed to support police officers with better cultural knowledge and understanding of the implications of apostates disclosing abuse. This study contributes to the view that apostates are hidden populations of abuse victims within religious households, and experience significant abuse, persons of Muslim heritage more than Christians, though few persons disclose their abuse to the authorities. Further research is needed to comprehend how to help victims of abuse.

Word Count: 5,000.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Tukey HSD post-hoc test for assault and birth religion

		Sig.
No Religion	Christian	.38
	Muslim	.00
Christian	No Religion	.38
	Muslim	.000
Muslim	No Religion	.000
	Christian	.000

Appendix B- Tukey HSD post-hoc test for serious assault and birth religion

		Sig.
No Religion	Christian	.95
	Muslim	.01
Christian	No Religion	.95
	Muslim	.00
Muslim	No Religion	.01
	Christian	.00

Appendix C- Tukey HSD post-hoc test for psychological abuse and birth religion

		Sig.
No Religion	Christian	.99
	Muslim	.27
Christian	No Religion	.99
	Muslim	.03
Muslim	No Religion	.27
	Christian	.03

Executive Summary.

Background to research

Having doubts about identifying as religious during my undergraduate degree, I made the decision to leave my religious faith and consequently identified as an apostate. Upon doing so, I felt isolated, alone, and vulnerable without a community to call my own, and an existential crisis as to what my purpose was in this world. I contacted an organisation called Faith to Faithless, as they support apostates, and was provided with an opportunity to talk at UCL in October (<http://bit.ly/29D04zG>). This talk made me realise there are people across the UK and worldwide that leave their religious faith and feel the same way that I felt. I continued my contact with Faith to Faithless, and was made aware of the physical, emotional, financial and psychological abuse many apostates face within their religious households. I was lucky, my disbelief in religion was not an issue for my parents, as they continue to support me and my endeavours. However, there are people who are not so lucky. I was further surprised that apostates in such predicaments have not received any recent academic attention.

Rationale for the study

Apostates are people raised within religious families who once identified as religious, but currently disbelieve in the existence of God, or gods, cease to have religious belief and who consequently identify as non-religious

(Hunsberger, 1983; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984). By identifying as an apostate, the individual relinquishes their in-group association to the ideology followed within the religious household such as Christianity and Islam (Tajfel, 1982). Furthermore, the scriptures of the Abrahamic religions (the Torah, Bible, and Qur'an), fail to acknowledge the plight of apostates, with an insistence the punishment for their apostasy to be death. This increases the likelihood for the individual to be victim of physical, psychological, and financial abuse within the household.

Research aims

This study aimed to highlight that apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims. Some families are guilty of abusing people that leave religion within their households, however the religious, traditional, and culturally complex nature of the abuse inhibits victims from disclosing their abuse. Apostates who are victims of abuse within religious households follow a similar trajectory to the issues that victims of domestic violence face. This study aims to emphasise that identifying as non-religious within religious households should not result in being abused.

How data was collected and analysed

Participants were recruited for this study with the support of Faith to Faithless. Faith to Faithless as an organisation provide worldwide support to people that choose to leave their religious faith through events within the UK, and provide online support to hidden populations of apostates that

require support in their decision to leave their faith and religion. Faith to Faithless posted the survey on their Facebook page (<http://bit.ly/29D04zG>) to opportunistically recruit participants for the survey.

Two hundred and twenty-nine participants were recruited in this study. One person's data was removed from analyses as they did not provide answers to the survey. Consequently, two hundred and twenty-eight participants' data was analysed. This study used a modified version of the revised conflict tactics scale (mCTS; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) to categorise the abuse faced by the victim by: assault, serious assault, psychological abuse, and negotiation. A univariate analysis of variance was conducted between the categories of the mCTS and either Birth Religion or Current Religion. For assault, serious assault, and psychological abuse, a post-hoc Tukey HSD analysis was conducted, due to significant results. Furthermore, information on whether participants disclosed their abuse to the police was collected.

Key findings

This study has shown, in similarity to the Census data for England and Wales in 2011, that religious affiliation is decreasing (Office for National Statistics, 2012). At birth, 130 persons identified as Christian, 68 persons identified as Muslim, and 18 persons identified as non-religious. However, in comparison currently, only 12 persons identify as Christian suggesting a 90% reduction in persons identifying with Christianity, 4 persons identify

as Muslim suggesting a 94% reduction in persons identifying with Islam, and 204 persons identify as non-religious suggesting a 1,033% increase in people identifying as non-religious.

Moreover, there remains a significant difference and large effect size between birth religion and assault, serious assault, and psychological abuse. Specifically identifying that people within Muslim households are more likely to experience abuse within those three categories. Negotiation produced no significant difference between the faiths and non-belief, to suggest there may be an attempt for families to comprehend apostasy of a family member.

This study has identified the inability of victims to disclose their abuse to the police. Out of 154 persons assaulted, 9 persons reported their assault, 5 assailants were given a warning, and only 1 person was charged. 71 persons disclosed their reasons for lack of disclosure. First, 44% ($N = 31$) persons believe disclosure would be disrespectful to their family dynamic and an act of betrayal to the family and the wider community. Second, 27% ($N = 19$) persons believe that the police would be unable to support them appropriately. Third, 25% ($N = 18$) persons are fearful of the repercussions of disclosing their assault by identifying as non-religious.

Implications

This study highlights that apostates do represent a hidden population of

abuse victims. In similarity to the awareness of the plight, and issues surrounding domestic violence victims, this study emphasises the need for criminal justice agencies to work more closely with local communities and religious organisations to raise awareness of the plight of apostates victims.

Recommendations

For this study to facilitate the increased awareness within the academic community of abuse relating to apostasy. For governments and policy makers to provide similar amounts of financial and emotional support given to domestic violence, FGM, and forced marriage victims, to apostatic victims of abuse. To work with criminal justice agencies, to increase awareness of the religious, traditional and cultural complexities, by creating an organisational framework to support victims of such abuse.

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PowerPoint Presentation (Handouts)

Do apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims?

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Aims of the Research and Rationale

Aims of the Research

- To highlight that apostates represent a hidden population of abuse victims
- Some families are guilty of abusing psychological knowledge within their households
- However:
 - Religious, traditional, and cultural/communal nature of abuse
 - Beliefs victims face discussing their abuse
- Available victims are similar to the victimisation faced by victims of domestic violence
- This study aims to emphasise:
 - Identifying as non-religious within religious households, should not result in being abused

Rationale

- Apostates are people raised within religious families who were identified as religious, but currently identify as non-religious (Hurlberger, 1983; Hurlberger & Brown, 1986)
- Identifying as an apostate:
 - Individual relinquishes association to original's ideology (Taylor, 1982)
 - Adopting religious scepticism
 - Teach, state and govern
 - Fail to acknowledge and support the plight of apostates
 - Evidence that punishment for apostates is death
- Increases likelihood for apostates to be victim of:
 - Physical, financial, and psychological/abuse within religious households

Methodology Used

Methodology

- Sample population recruited opportunistically with the support of Faith to Faithless
- Two hundred and twenty-nine participants recruited
- One participant's data removed from analysis due to not providing any answers to the survey

Demographic Data

- Two hundred and twenty-eight participants' data analysed
 - Mean age being 32 (SD = 10.88)
- Gender:
 - 32% (N = 113) female
 - 68% (N = 115) male
 - 8% (N = 7) non-binary gender
- Ethnicity:
 - 33% White (N = 134)
 - 22% Asian/Asian British (N = 88)
 - 11% Other (N = 25)
 - 8% identified as Mixed/R of different groups (N = 32)
 - 4% identified as Black/Black British/Black African (N = 15)

Results of the Research

Table 1: Abuse

- 30% reduction in people identifying as Christian
- 16% reduction in people identifying as Muslim
- 1,033% increase in people identifying as non-religious

Table 2: Abuse: Religion of Self

- Significant difference and large effect size between Self-Religion and:
- Abuse: F(3, 223) = 5.87, p < .001, $\eta^2 = .1$
- Serious Abuse: F(3, 223) = 4.45, p < .001, $\eta^2 = .1$
- Psychological Abuse: F(3, 223) = 7.23, p < .001, $\eta^2 = .1$
- No significant difference, despite large effect size between Self-Religion and:
- Neglect: F(3, 223) = 3.01, p = 0.46, $\eta^2 = .1$

Religion of Partner

- Out of 234 partners recruited
- 8 reported their religion to the Police
- Five participants were given oversteering
- Only one was charged

Religion of Self	Self-Religion	Partner-Religion	Mean	SD
Abuse	Christian	Non-Christian	1.04	2.25
Serious Abuse	Christian	Non-Christian	0.20	0.69
Psychological Abuse	Christian	Non-Christian	1.01	1.88
Neglect	Christian	Non-Christian	4.10	4.21

Implications of the Research

- Apostates do represent a hidden population of abuse victims
- Abuse occurs within households
 - Limited access by Third parties household
- Religious, traditional, and cultural complexities within households
 - Decreases disclosure rate
 - Facilitates abuse to continue without detection
 - This may be pertinent across communities
- Abuse is similar to domestic violence
 - Requires collaboration between criminal justice agencies, local groups, and religious organisations
 - In similarity to awareness of forced marriage and GB

Suggestions for Future Research

- Further research should aim to comprehend:
 - How non-apostate victims are supported?
 - How can criminal justice agencies, complement cultural complexities, to support the plight of victims in need of their help?
 - Working focus groups with local community groups, local religious groups and religious organisations to raise awareness of the issues that occur
 - Living within the UK
 - The Law protects the right of citizens from such abuse
 - The doctrines of religious ideologies do not trump the Law of the land
 - Further research is required as to how the Law and criminal justice agencies can operationalise support to apostate victims of abuse

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Reflective report of Research Activities

Conceptualisation

On the 2nd October 2015; during the discussions relating to research themes with potential supervisors, I was informed that a personal friend had committed suicide. This had considerably affected my ability to conceptualise a research project for the MSc during the allocated discussion period. I was considerably upset with the death of my friend, and Dr Vincent Egan (Vince) spotted me in the foyer. We discussed issues relating to terrorism, extremism, and ideological differences, and Vince suggested an idea relating to gamification and implicating doubt to ideological views. On the 19th October, Dr Shihning Chou (Shihning) informed me that my initial idea was unfortunately rejected, however, that Vince had offered an alternative idea: to see a correlational study of the dark triad and unpleasant aspects of cognition and reasoning failure, as disruption of cognition and reasoning is higher in offenders. I accepted Vince's alternative idea and arranged to meet him on the 22nd October 2015.

During the meeting on the 22nd October, Vince elaborated on his original idea. It seemed interesting, and I was willing to partake in the idea. However, Vince asked whether I had any ideas of my own. I explained that my idea relates to a talk I was invited to give: I was invited to speak at UCL in relation to apostasy by an organisation called Faith to Faithless, as I had left Hinduism in 2013/14 during my undergraduate degree. During

and after the talk, I became more aware of the abuse that some apostates have faced by identifying as non-religious to their families within their household. Apostates have been taunted, threatened to be attacked, harmed, or even killed due to their lack of religiosity, and Faith to Faithless receive emails and correspondence by victims on a daily basis. The co-founders of the organisation explained that despite their best efforts, the law and criminal justice agencies are naive in their approach to supporting apostates. Due to the often religious, traditional, and cultural complexities of apostate abuse, the police fail to support apostatic victims. Vince seemed to be excited by this, and offered ideas on how the idea could be pragmatically explored. Vince gave me a week, until the 29th October, to produce a report on both ideas.

The evening of the 22nd, I contacted one of the co-founders of Faith to Faithless, Imtiaz Shams, about the opportunity to bring the issues relating to apostasy to the attention of academia, and he was willing to support this venture. On the 29th October, I had another meeting with Vince. Despite Vince CC'ing me into an email with his associate in Australia relating to his initial idea about the dark triad earlier that week, I did not produce a report on his idea. I was enthused towards the idea of researching apostasy; following the support from Imtiaz, to highlight the abuse faced by people who identify as non-religious within religious households. I apologised to Vince for not looking into the other topic, to which he replied that his job is to steer me along the right lines, yet it is for me to choose where I intend

to go. The conceptualisation of this research project developed around the notion that apostates do represent a hidden population of abuse victims.

Preparation

I contacted Vince on the 18th November 2015 identifying that, in relation to apostasy, there remains a void within the academic literature. This would mean, that I would have to create the survey, without relying on previous research to support the rationale for my idea. Vince explained that despite the literature being spotty, this study could act as a bibliography for readers on this specific topic. I submitted my research proposal to Vince on the 21st November, and on the 21st December submitted the edits made to the research proposal. Writing the research proposal proved to be difficult due to the lack of awareness within the academic research of the issues concerning apostates. Coincidentally however, this relayed the view that apostates may consequently represent a hidden population of abuse victims. I decided to adapt the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) to suit the research of abuse on apostates, to provide psychological rigour to the study. I removed the questions relating to sexual violence, and adapted the study to replace 'my partner' terms with 'my family', to highlight abuse committed by family members.

On the 21st January 2016, Vince explained that I had struggled to simplify the science relating to this project: to ensure that it was not biased against

people identifying as religious. He suggested I broaden the recruitment for the survey to apostates, the religious, and those identifying as neither. I submitted my edits to Vince on the 25th January, to which he replied in kind with further edits also. I submitted my research proposal to the Ethics Committee on the 26th January.

Design

The online survey was created using the Bristol Online Survey tool. The survey included an information sheet, and demographic questions. The survey included questions relating to their current circumstances, their religious identity from birth, and their current religious or non-religious identity, whether their family are aware of their identity decision, before asking the participant to complete the modified conflict tactics scale. The survey further asks whether the person has disclosed their abuse to the police, and to provide a qualitative account as to why they had not. The survey provides a debrief form, signposting the participant of charities and organisations that can help them if they require support.

Data Collection

I was late in submitting my documents to the Ethics Committee. I was diagnosed with gastroenteritis at the beginning of January, and this worsened throughout the month. My GP had also admitted me to hospital with the off-chance I had appendicitis. Due to my ill health, Vince had contacted me regarding a 'Plan B' in case the Ethics Committee deemed my

research proposal to be unfit to pursue. I received confirmation from the Ethics Committee however, that my research had been given a favourable opinion on the 11th March. Vince was excited, as was I, to see this study go live as soon as possible. I received an email from Vince on the 11th April asking about an update in relation to how the project was going. I was still physically ill at the time. Furthermore, due to the time taken for the Ethics Committee to support the project, Faith to Faithless informed me that another person had created an online survey and posted it before we could, causing a conflict online. This conflict required Faith to Faithless to wait a short amount of time before posting the survey online. Vince stressed to me that working with another organisation to support the distribution of the survey was intentionally okay, however, this can create complacency, and may not result in acquiring enough participants for the survey to be at the standard required for the MSc. The survey was posted by Faith to Faithless on the 19th April. Peter Tatchell also posted the survey. By the 28th April, 201 persons had been recruited. I arranged a meeting with Vince on the 24th May to discuss the progress made on the survey.

Distributing a survey online with an external organisation opened the survey and myself to open-critique. Firstly, some people commented that the survey was targeted to a younger audience, which some people felt disenfranchised whilst filling it out. This may be true, however, the survey aimed to understand the abuse that victims face within their religious household. Secondly, some people had an issue with the length of the

survey. For example, for victims that may have their computer access monitored, they may feel unable to complete the survey, due to the conflict tactics scale being a lengthy ordeal. Thirdly, some people were surprised, shocked and even angry that a survey exists looking into people leaving their religion. This simply relates to ignorance, prejudice and naivety, and further suggests why this study was one of its kind.

Data Analysis

I closed the survey on receiving 229 participants. However, due to one participant not answering any questions, the overall total become 228 participants. This felt like a major achievement. Vince and I looked through the data briefly, and we were excited with the data collected. Vince provided me with a meeting on the 7th June, for me to clean the data, and to have tables in a more accessible format. Vince further stressed the angle of this project was to uncover a hidden population of victims. The meeting on the 7th consisted of Vince and I programming SPSS to understand the data. I was completely out of my depth, in relation to SPSS programming, however, managed to engage with SPSS to understand the data and tables. Vince carried out a functional analysis on the four categories of the Conflict Tactics Scale. I had made an error regarding the labelling of the terms of the data, which caused an issue when analysing the data. This was rectified that evening.

I felt overwhelmed about the statistical data, leading up to the write-up.

Being physically unwell was further affecting my performance. On the 16th June, I emailed Shihning asking for advice: my GP had referred me to a consultant at the hospital, with a procedure booked on the 19th July. The stress relating to being unwell, the dissertation deadline, and the fear of undergoing a procedure for the first time were taking its toll. I received mitigating circumstances because of the procedure.

Write up

Being unwell at the time of writing the dissertation, proved difficult. I was late submitting my draft to Vince, due to being unwell, and submitted my draft to Vince on the 1st August. Vince replied with edits to the original dissertation, highlighting that there was much work to be done. To discuss the issues of the draft, I arranged a Skype call with Vince to go through, specifically the results section and the overall aims of the research project. Vince further clarified the areas required to ensure the discussion parts of the study follow a correct theme. Furthermore, I asserted my concerns relating to the results section, in which Vince was able to take me through the section and explain what was expected of me.

Following my conversation with Vince, the doctor had diagnosed me with IBS. This made the write-up of the edits further difficult to complete. I consequently aimed to emphasise the social psychological mechanisms relating to the victimology of apostatic abuse. Receiving the edits from Vince, worried me. The results from this study were significant to the field,

as the study has not been done before, furthered the need for the write-up to do justice for the victims that currently do not have a voice within the academic sphere. The stress of this further dawned upon me.

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