Muslims Emerging into Adulthood in an Uncertain Sociocultural Climate

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This study explored the manner in which Muslims emerging into adulthood carve their social identity as Muslims, and their sense of belonging through their experiences in Australia. An interpretative phenomenological methodology was utilised. In depth interviews were undertaken with eight emerging adults and four adults who work with emerging adults. The article presents data that indicates that this group of Muslims emerging into adulthood in Australia face various hurdles of discrimination while they try to retain and represent their religious identity. Community volunteering seemed to be a protective factor. Despite the unique challenges faced, they still feel a sense of belonging and identify as Australian Muslims.

Keywords: Muslims, Australian-Muslims, sense of belonging, identity, community psychology, emerging into adulthood

The ambiguous period extending from the late-teenage years through to the mid-to-late 20s (Arnett, 2000; Corrales et al., 2016) is referred to as emerging adulthood. The five core characteristics used to define emerging adulthood are the feeling of being in limbo, instability, exploration, self-focus, and optimism (Arnett, 2004). During this stage, the incidence of mental health problems and the engagement of risk behaviours is high (Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2015). The emerging adult can be faced with newly found independence, unstable relationships, employment stressors, and is challenged to cope with identity development and social and contextual changes (Barlett & Barlett, 2015; Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2015). Managing these can exceed the coping resources of the emerging adult (Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2015).

In contemporary developed society, individuals go through a prolonged period in becoming an adult (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Hadad & Schachter, 2011). As such, the development of identity is significant during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Hadad & Schachter, 2011). Identity can be considered a "self-structure" consisting of the internal, self-constructed organisation of abilities, beliefs, and past (Ritchie et al., 2013). To meet the approval of others, one might direct themselves to be viewed in a certain manner described as identity image orientation (Veksler & Meyer, 2014). Altering one's identity to fit into a group can result in having a supportive social group and can provide various benefits to the emerging adult (Lane & Fink, 2015).

Social Identity is the term used to refer to an individual's construct of self through the lens of a group (Meuret et al., 2016), holding with them a set of common societal identifiers (Stets & Burke, 2000). Individuals who claim to be similar to self are considered as being 'in-group' whereas individuals who differ are considered 'out-group' (Stets & Burke, 2000). Group identification as an aspect of membership includes a sense of identity and self-definition attained through feeling subjective attachment to the group (Miller et al., 2015). People identify with groups once they have a degree of similarities between themselves, members of the group, or values of the group (Veelen et al., 2014; Veelen et al., 2013). This not only leads to compliance with group norms and cooperative behaviour towards in-group members, but has been linked to high levels of psychological wellbeing and a greater sense of purpose (Miller et al., 2015; Sani et al., 2015). If an individual self-stigmatises or accepts negative social attitudes towards an in-group including stigma-related threats, they may cope by viewing themselves as

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being different or refuse group identification (Meuret et al., 2016). While this coping strategy can be easier, it is associated with aggravated distress and can be disempowering (Meuret et al., 2016). Group identification is not a completely stable concept and can change as one accumulates new information, moves into a new context, or if the influences on their identity change (Meuret et al., 2016). This highlights that identity is fluid (Bradatan et al., 2010).

Religious identity is considered one of the main social identifiers of an individual (Greenfield, & Marks, 2007; Petrova, 2016). This multidimensional process plays a significant role in formulating an individual's personal and existential worldview. Religious identity can be defined by the individual's emotional, and cognitive spheres (Jeong, 2014; Petrova, 2016). It plays a role in an individual's morality (or behavioural constraint), is considered a protective factor against community violence (Fowler et al., 2008) and affects behaviour in various interactions (Petrova, 2016). The Social Identity Theory can provide insight into understanding religious identification as social identities that pertain to social group members are internalised as being a part of the self-concept (Jeong, 2014). As such, religious affiliation can be characterised as being a member of a social group and group identification (Jeong, 2014; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2016). The variation of one's sense of belonging (and commitment) to a religious group can cause variations in their sense of in-group versus out-group (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2016). While religious fundamentalism is associated with intolerances towards out-groups, intrinsic (or journey-oriented quests) can be associated with low prejudice (Choma et al., 2016).

Sense of belonging has been identified as a basic human need and ranked in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, it can be considered the conceptual link that is missing in understanding mental health from an interaction or relationship perspective (Kitchen et al., 2012). The need to belong is considered a highly significant motivator responsible for one's positive emotional, psychological, and cognitive processes (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Kitchen et al., 2012). It is argued that questions revolving around identity come to the forefront of an individual when one is uncertain about where they belong, in which instance, the need to belong can be referred to as the way that one views themselves compared to others in society (or group) (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015).

The need to belong can be described as being central to community well-being as it is a reflection of the inter-relationship community members have and the strength of bonding amongst members (Akın & Akın, 2015). This description has been expanded to include a feeling of belonging, a feeling of mattering to one another and the group, and shared assurance that each member's needs will be met through the commitment they have to be together (Akın & Akın, 2015).

A sense of community and community participation both encompass community member's engagement and active involvement in matters that affect the lives of other community members as well as matters that impact the larger community (Talò et al., 2014). Community participation and sense of community are interrelated and are considered factors that promote the development of a community, actualise the ability and capacity to activate a community's internal human resources, and promote social empowerment (Talò et al., 2014). A sense of community is inversely related to feelings of loneliness, depressive symptoms, suicide, and feelings of alienation (Akın & Akın, 2015; Kitchen et al., 2012; Talò et al., 2014).

Social exclusion can refer to individuals who, as a group or on their own, experience various disadvantages in society (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013). It can include multiple dimensions of deprivation including financial deprivation, social deprivation (inability to interact socially) and lack of community (Dennis et al., 2016). It can also refer to and be seen in four dimensions: limited social participation, lack of normative integration, material deprivation, and inadequate access to basic social rights (Dennis et al., 2016; Vrooman & Hoff, 2013).

While social exclusion can be voluntary, the denial of access to resources and opportunities can result in discrimination, deprivation, and polarisation amongst community members and individuals (Cheung, 2013; Dennis et al., 2016). This social phenomenon can weigh heavily on individuals going through the stage of discovery, independence, and experimentation (Abello et al., 2015). It can result in a delayed transition that can lead to future difficulties and poor outcomes in the individual's social relationships, health, and employment (Abello et al., 2015; Dennis et al., 2016). Social exclusion can also effect various levels of cognition including early-stage and later-stage (Xu et al., 2015). It can negatively influence memory, behaviour, self-regulation, mental health, and attention (Xu et al., 2015).

The disadvantages of social exclusion have been linked to the experiences of insiders and outsiders in local communities (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013). Intolerance of others and discrimination between groups are prevalent as are prejudicial attitudes towards the 'other' (Passini & Morselli, 2016). This aversive and hostile behaviour and attitude towards the 'other' can occur simply due to the 'other' not belonging to the dominant group (Passini & Morselli, 2016). In a majority of Western democratic societies, this form of social exclusion does not occur as an open conflict due to democratic principles, however is translated and transformed into a subtle, covert, socially acceptable and difficult to detect manner (Passini & Morselli, 2016).

Australia is considered a country that not only explicitly adopts a multicultural policy, but also reaffirms and encourages this policy and the importance of cultural diversity and social cohesion (Abu-Rayya et al., 2016). Despite this, even politicians in Australia have been reported to raise concerns regarding Muslims and their alleged inability to adopt Australian values (Kabir, 2008, 2011). Muslims are portrayed as dangerous delusional individuals who are unable to commit to liberal democracy thereby normalising Islamophobia (Abu-Rayya & White, 2010; Abu-Rayya et al., 2016; Isakjee, 2016; Kabir, 2008, 2011; Pedersen et al., 2009; Yucel, 2015). This use of political fear not only leads to social segregation, but also destabilises social inclusion in a country that thrives on multiculturalism (Abu-Rayya & White, 2010). The social destabilisation between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia can be seen through the poll conducted by the Australian television channel, Channel Nine, which concluded that 88% of the general public in Australia believed that Muslims cannot be loyal to Australia (Yucel, 2015).

The political fear that is used by opportunistic politicians continues to ignite fire of social segregation, exclusion and discrimination. In the forefront of political and media commentaries for the way that they visually identify, Muslim females are called to demonstrate their loyalty to Australia and are referred to as being passive victims of oppression, lacking equality and threatening Australian culture (Woodlock, 2011). While Muslims endure various problematic portrayals and stereotypical perceptions, they are also faced with the effects of these negative perceptions (Dunn, 2004). These effects can include racist violence, unfair treatments and behaviour, threats of their identity, arson, and exclusion (Dunn, 2004; Woodlock, 2011). Many young Muslims are simultaneously promised opportunities that they are later denied due to institutionalised racism that leads towards their systematic exclusion (Roose & Harris, 2015). The prejudiced behaviour displayed towards Muslims has profound implications, openly hampering their cultural belonging and adaption making them feel culturally inferior, incompatible or radically different from the Australian society and culture and feeling as though they are the 'dangerous other' (Abu-Rayya et al., 2016) or the 'enemy' (Kabir, 2016). This can push Muslim youth to alienation, anti-social behaviour, and extremism (Roose & Harris, 2015).

Muslims emerging into adulthood are often depicted as individuals who are a threat to Australia (Matindoost, 2015). For those who consider themselves as being an Australian

Muslim, this depiction and categorisation magnifies and jeopardises both their religious identity and their social identity (Matindoost, 2015).

This study was conducted in a bid to contribute to the understanding of Muslims emerging into adulthood and their experiences given the current and ongoing sociocultural climate. It also aims to contribute to the development of appropriate interventions on a community and individual level as a successful transition into adulthood brings forth positive outcomes such as social competence, life satisfaction, and civic engagement while a transition that consists of negative experiences and adjustment difficulties can have negative and problematic outcomes for an individual (O'Connor et al., 2012).

Method

The study focused on the experiences of individuals emerging into adulthood who identify as being Australian Muslim. For data collection, semi-structured one-to-one interviews were utilised. Although an outline of topics was developed, the interview process was open-ended non-directive (Morrow, 2005; Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2011; Willig, 2013). This was done in order to facilitate a conversation and explore the individuals' experiences while allowing a wider range of topics to be discussed than what was proposed in the interview outline (Morrow, 2005; Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2011; Willig, 2013). It is considered a valuable method for the exploration of an individual's experiences rather than the researcher as an expert (Smith, 2011). Ethics approval from Victoria University was approved prior to data collection (HRE15-311).

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants from online Islamic community groups and Facebook. A flyer was posted identifying the recruitment criteria as individuals aged between 18 to 29 years old, born in Australia and who identified as being Australian Muslims. In addition, a flyer for recruitment of older individuals who were currently working with Australian Muslim people aged 18-29 and who also identified as Australian Muslims was sent to Islamic community organisations.

Participants who were considered to have transitioned into adulthood (28 or over) were personally contacted and asked if they wished to take part in the study. They were all individuals who worked closely with Muslims emerging into adulthood or were leaders in youth organisations who were working with Muslims emerging into adulthood. These individuals were chosen based on common community awareness that the researcher had and through snowballing. It was hoped that the experience that they gained through working with those emerging into adulthood would add to the insight, knowledge, and experiences of emerging adults. The adult participants may also give voice to a wider range of emerging adults not only bringing forth the experiences that emerging adults that they have communicated with have had, but also providing insight into their own experiences growing up in Australia. This may provide further insight into any changes in the transition process over generations.

Twelve self-identified Australian Muslims participated. Eight were emerging into adulthood (two male and six female) and were all leaders in organisations supporting Muslim youth. Four were adults working with Australian Muslims emerging into adulthood. Two of the female emerging adult participants did not visually identify as being Muslim. The average age of the emerging adults was 23.2. From the adult participants, two were male while two were female. Both female participants visually identified as being Muslim by wearing a hijab. The average age of adult participants was 35.5. Table 1 details the demographic information of participants emergin into adulthood.

Table 1

Demographic information of participants emerging into adulthood

Pseudonym	Age	Country of Birth	Gender	Visual Identification	Years in Australia	Highest Level of Education	Marital Status	Employment Status	Education Secondary
Beckir	26	Australia	M	-	26	Bachelor	Single	Unemployed	Private – Islamic
Amy	24	Lebanon	F	-	2	Post-graduate	Single	Casual	Public
Mary	23	Australia	F	Hijab	23	Bachelor	Single	Fulltime	Public
Sasha	24	Australia	F	Hijab	7	Year 12	Married	Maternity	Public & Private
Messie	24	Australia	F	-	24	Bachelor	Single	Fulltime	Private
Lisa	21	Australia	F	Niqab	21	Bachelor	Single	Fulltime	Private
Sarah	23	Australia	F	Hijab	14	Bachelor	Single	Fulltime	Private
Zack	24	Australia	M	-	24	Bachelor	Single	Casual	Public

Table 2 below details demograhic information for adult participants.

Table 2

Demographic of adult participants

Pseudonym	Age	Country of Birth	Gender	Visual Identification	Years in Australia	Highest Level of Education	Education Secondary
Ozzie	43	Australia	F	Hijab	39	Post-graduate	Public
Shirin	43	Turkey	F	Hijab	40	Bachelor	Public
Faruk	28	Australia	M	-	28	Post-Graduate	Public
Mert	31	Australia	M	-	31	Bachelor	Public & Private

Interviews

Individuals expressing interest were provided with the information sheet, queries were addressed, and a consent form was provided. Participants were informed that a pseudonym will be used, and that interviews are conducted on a one-to-one basis in an isolated room. A semi-structured interview schedule was designed using themes that were relevant to the topic. This served as a guide for the interviewer and initiated discussion.

The interview format consisted of one main question “Tell me what it is like for you to be coming towards the age of __ as an Australian Muslim?” followed by a discussion between

the interviewee and interviewer. The interview format for adult participants consisted of the following questions "Tell me about any experiences you have had working with Australian Muslims emerging into adulthood" and "Tell me about your experiences in emerging into adulthood as an Australian Muslim". These questions were followed by a discussion between the interviewee and interviewer.

A demographics questionnaire was used to gather information about participants such as age, occupation and educational status (Refer to Table 1 and Table 2).

Interpretation of data

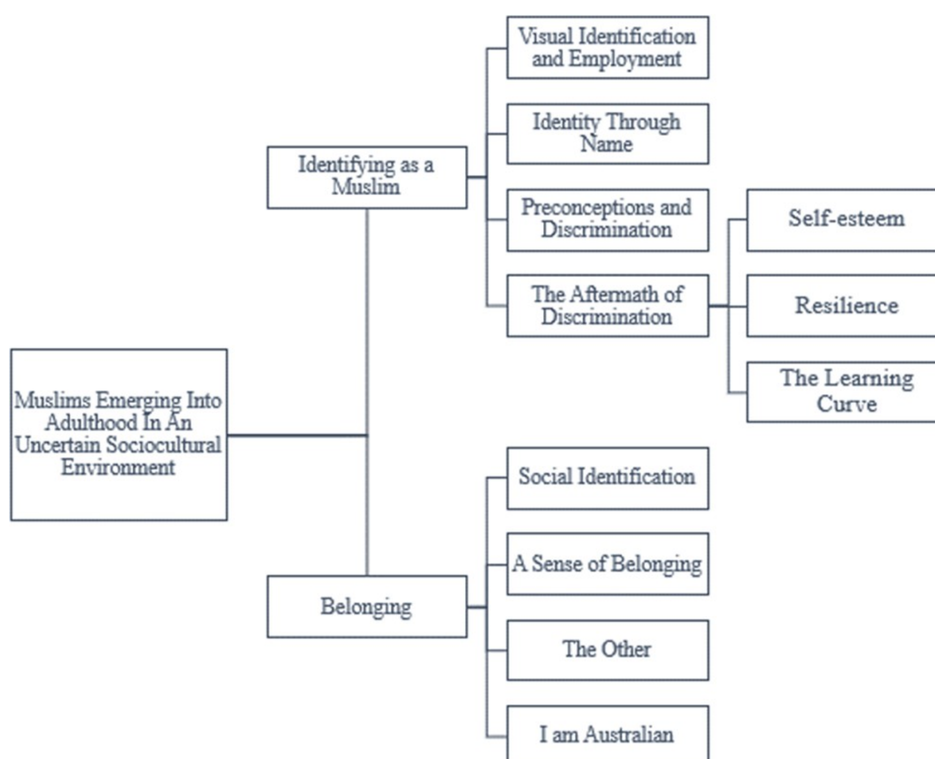
The study utilised an Interpretative Phenomenological Methodology (IPA). This allowed active engagement with participants and the data, allowing participants to offer their own insight and subjective experiences (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2011; Willig, 2013). This allowed meaning to be established on how young Muslims make sense of their world and their experiences emerging into adulthood or their experiences working with those who are emerging into adulthood (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2011). When analysing and interpreting the data, intense engagement with the data is needed (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2011). This allows a tie to occur between IPA and the hermeneutic perspective (Smith, 2011).

Findings and Discussion

The focus of the study was to explore the experiences of individuals emerging into adulthood who identify as being Muslim Australian. Participants spoke of the manner in which they visually identify as being a Muslim and their identity through their name. The preconceptions and discrimination that they faced when identifying as a Muslim was also a topic of discussion by participants. In addition to this, participants spoke of social identification, their sense of belonging as well as the feeling of being considered the 'other' in the country that they call home. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the themes and sub-themes based on coding results.

Figure 1

Themes and Subthemes



Identifying as a Muslim

The Social Identity Theory encapsulates that individuals identify with others in social categories (Berglund, 2013). Identity is grounded in various social categories and notions of behaviours that adhere to those categories (Berglund, 2013). When people follow those notions, they affirms their image and their identity to themselves and others resulting in a number of internal (emotional or psychological) and external (economic and social) effects (Berglund, 2013).

Visual Identification and Employment

The conflation in public perceptions of Muslims with terrorism can cause a sense of insecurity for Muslims. Individuals spoke of their experiences:

> *"There's this fear of being identified as a Muslim because there's this whole "terrorism" "violence" and "oppression". That is more vocal now with all the political issues that are happening…and because of that people are looking at it in such a simplistic way where it's like "oh my God, if I look Muslim, I'm associated with this" it's not necessarily about faith, they still truly believe in their faith, but now there's this fear of actually looking that part and there's pressure with that" (Mary, 23).*

And,

> *"We are in a situation where media has got negative effects to the religion and the fact that I look more Middle Eastern, I'm already pointed out as Muslim, so therefore if I am in a conference and I'm the only one going in with dark hair, dark*

> *eyes, dark skin, Middle Eastern appearance, I will probably already be in that position of being "Muslim", and after that it all depends on how the others, or those who already see me as a Muslim, judge me as a Muslim so there is that sort of downfall" (Zack, 24).*

As seen in the above quotes, the way an individual visually identifies with their religion can vary and is not always intentional (Ali, 2014). While some visually identify as a Muslim through clothing, others may be deemed Muslim based on their Middle Eastern features (Ali, 2014). When religious identity is on display, discrimination can occur through the manner they are depicted in media (Ali, 2014). This can play a role in their construct of self (self-categorisation) through the lens of the group that they are being identified with and the manner in which they are labelled "in-group" or "out-group" (Stets & Burke, 2000). Muslim women are specifically targeted due to their visual identification (Matindoost, 2015). As such, the impact of discrimination or resentment towards Muslim females is higher and evident through additional challenges they face including physical attacks and racial comments (Matindoost, 2015). Sirin spoke of her experience:

> *"I didn't have a hijab on, and I had been employed. I happened to be one of their star employees at the time I had decided to put my hijab on and I told my manager, he responded that I can't do that because it is not a part of the uniform. It was an interesting conversation…My manager responded negatively saying "I don't think we can accept that" and I was smart enough to say "what will you do when I do cover and wear the hijab? You've just awarded me a high honour of employee of the month and it has been consecutive"…he said he would have to consider termination so I went and got some advice …of course they advised there is no way they could do that…"(Sirin, 43).*

Sirin also spoke about the experiences that her friends have had. These were similar to the participants in Berglund's (2013) study who spoke about the fear that clothing or jewellery will communicate 'Muslim' placing the individual in a risky position during their search for employment (Berglund, 2013). Participants in Berglund's (2013) study also spoke of Muslim females removing their hijab or changing their names in a bid to get a job. Similarly,

> *"A few female friends have chosen to take the hijab off simply because of the struggles that they feel the hijab has contributed to them not being able to attain a job, be employed and be a part of life's social fabric" (Sirin, 43).*

Likewise,

> *"I'm afraid because I'm thinking of wearing hijab soon so I'm hoping to not be affected when I start work or when I start applying for a job. I don't want my hijab to affect me. I want to get a job and I want to experience my Islam…I just want to be as a human being. Just want people to interact with me, behave with me, talk with me, as a human, just as a human" (Amy, 24*).

The aggravated distress and fear of disempowerment with visually identifying as a Muslim highlights the fear that the emerging adult has with their group identification. Through identifying with the religion, the individual would be refusing the negative social attitudes and stigma related threats that are connected with the group (Meuret et al., 2016).

Identity Through Name

In a comparable light to religious visual identification, Sirin brought some insight into the experiences individuals have had due to their Middle-Eastern sounding names:

"We've actually got alumni that have graduated, and we often talk about it. Actually two of our students that have attained engineering degrees have commented that when their name is on the resume that they feel is one of the reasons they've never been contacted ever despite qualification, despite giving their resume at the same time with people and their friends that are graduates so the name they feel is really making a big difference" (Sirin, 43).

Similarly,

"I had trouble finding a job in that particular manner a few years ago. I know for a fact that when I was working for my second employer, every time a Muslim would submit a resume they would throw it straight into the bin. One day when I was walking past the photocopy machine I saw the name Mohammed…I actually picked up the resume and I said to the boss "did someone send in a resume?", he said "oh nah yeah, we had a few people who sent in their resumes through, but they're not really experienced" and when I opened the resume he had 15 years of experience so they didn't employ him because of his name even though they needed someone. I do know of people who have struggled to find jobs because of their names and from the pressure they think that the solution is to change their name on their resume…I do know of people that have changed their names on their resumes only for the sake of getting the job" (Mert, 31).

Although a name change may aid in employment and allow the individual to "fit in", it can diminish or reduce one's religious identity and possibly disappoint or alienate them from their community (Berglund, 2013). This can affect the individual on a psychological and emotional level (Berglund, 2013). While the choice of employment can come hand-in-hand with self-hate, shame, and guilt, unemployment can come hand-in-hand with integrity (Berglund, 2013). The significant role of a name was also experienced by Zack:

"I literally got told, my boss would say, "I wasn't going to even interview you because of your name" …I would say …especially for people that's more of a Muslim name, they will be rejected straight away. Obviously, I do have that feeling of sense of discrimination. I've heard of others...it all stems to obtaining a job and that's the key thing about adulthood, the financial side, I would say finding a job is a struggle" (Zack, 24).

In a similar light, participants in Berglund's (2013) study discussed growing up with the thought of there being no need to look for work as non-Muslims will always get the job. Such claims were deemed to be true due to exposure to large numbers of unemployed high-achieving Muslims who had firsthand experience in being rejected when using their given Muslim name and employed when using a Western name (Berglund, 2013).

Preconceptions and Discrimination

Likewise, male Muslims in Ali's (2014) study stated that when employers heard a Muslim name, they did not want to work with or hire that individual due to their direct fear of Muslim males, their preconceptions, and any associated connotations (Ali, 2014). This form of involuntary social exclusion can weigh heavily on the identity formation of the emerging adult and can result in discrimination or polarisation (Abello et al., 2015; Cheung, 2013; Dennis et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2015). The manner in which the media portrays Muslims as well as the way peers, colleagues, and members of society perceive and engage with Muslims does have both direct and indirect effects on Muslims (Ali, 2014):

"In high school, a very close friend and it was the time of the Bali bombings… she said, "you know the Bali bombers, doesn't terrorism like run in your blood" I actually got angry" (Mary, 23).

In a similar light to Mary, Sarah stated:

"There have been times where I feel uncomfortable when I'm interacting with a non-Muslim for the first time. I do get a bit uneasy because I don't know how they are going to respond. Someone might at one moment turn around and be like "hey, you are a terrorist" and I haven't lived with that before. I don't know how I can respond to that…that does make me uneasy at times" (Sarah, 23).

And,

"There was one case where we were out. It was towards The Great Ocean Road and we were at a servo. There was another Muslim female in front of us and you could tell she was Muslim because of the way she was dressed. Some man decided to make a racist remark. I can't remember what it was, but she didn't understand what was going on. It was me and my friend who had to obviously protect her and answer back to him. It was really shocking because I wasn't expecting it. It was just unexpected and he just yelled out in front of? everyone when he was obviously directing his words at her so one of my friends, she became very defensive and she was like "you are so rude, I can't believe this is happening" and it was quite disappointing that no one at the time…you knew that they were all racist and that they didn't want Muslims to be around that area because no one else actually raised their words and said anything… that was a pretty terrible experience and after that there has been times where I have been like 'oh my God, I'm travelling out to a place there's non-Muslims, no Muslims at all, What am I going to experience?'" (Sarah, 23).

On the contrary,

"To be honest, there have been times especially at uni where I haven't mentioned, I don't mention my background and religion… that's something that I dodge at uni around people who aren't Muslim" (Messie, 24).

Messie went on to state:

"There are times when I've been scared. I've got a sister who is covered. There are days when she leaves the house and goes to uni and she's experienced it, she's been verbally attacked by someone on the train. It frightens you and you just realise there's so much attention on you as a Muslim and I'm not going to lie sometimes I would, as bad as this sounds to our religion, but try to hide it because it's a scary feeling, living in a country where it is our religion, there's so much oppression (towards it), there's so much, it's scary" (Messie, 24).

And,

"I remember this one time we went to Queensland for example, there's not a very big Muslim community there, there isn't... It felt like when we were there everyone was looking at my sister very weirdly. They were looking at her almost as though they've never seen anyone with a hijab before and that came to our attention…I definitely become more protective over her because obviously she's getting all attention as a hijabi" (Messie, 24).

Mary who wears the hijab had a different experience:

> *"I had a friend who went to Sydney and her experiences were very different to mine. She said, people were staring at her and that you know because she is a Muslim, but when I went, I didn't feel any of that. When I went to Queensland and another friend said the same thing. She said she felt people were looking at her. I didn't feel that at all. Even though the areas that we were in were not necessarily populated with many Muslims" (Mary, 23).*

Lisa explained her experience wearing the niqab:

> *"There's obviously been times when there's been racist remarks, but I believe people are culturally unaware… it's not very frequent, however it's in specific areas that I go to. It's more areas where there isn't much culture. I feel they are the most close-minded, because they are culturally unaware...the people just say "take it off, go back to your country." One incident which was really eye-opening, I was walking and he stopped me… he was really angry like "why are you wearing that?" and usually I'd be frightened, obviously cause if you come across a lady who is racially abusing you, you can stand up for yourself, but when it is a male you are a bit wary cause they are obviously physically stronger, but at that time, I needed to represent who I am and I don't deserve to be spoken to in that rude manner so I turned around and I spoke to him... "I'm actually from Australia and I'm studying here and I've got a job here" and he was like "wow your accent is so well". He was very surprised cause I think everyone is surprised I can speak English and then I started telling him how I work and everything and he was really impressed… I feel like that gave me kind of confidence boost that people who have emotional remarks and stuff shouldn't get me down or shouldn't get me upset because they don't know because I believe that they don't understand and they aren't unaware, so giving, I think as Australian-Muslims our duty is to represent ourselves well and educate others" (Lisa, 21).*

The comments made towards Mary, Lisa, and Sarah regarding terrorism as well as the fears Sarah and Messie have in regard to their identification as a Muslim (or their loved ones identifying as Muslims) were similar to the experiences of participants in the study by Ali (2014). The changes that participants made and precautions that they took (or continue to take) particularly after being negatively portrayed in media, highlights the direct and indirect impact media can have on Muslims which can vary from leading the individual towards socially acceptable or unacceptable behaviours or thinking patterns (Ali, 2014). It also brings forth the manner in which some participants such as Messie chose to hide parts of their identity to meet the approval from others (Lane & Fink, 2015; Veksler & Meyer, 2014). While Lisa also sought the approval of the community and have a sense of belonging, Lisa chose to do this by trying to convey to others that she was like the rest of the Australian public and that she was not what the media portrayed rather she and her Australian peers had similar attributes such as being a good citizen and working.

The Aftermath of Discrimination

Self-Esteem - While Lisa does state that she feels as though it is her responsibility as an Australian Muslim is to educate others about Muslims and that this experience gave her a confidence boost, other occasions have caused her distress:

> "I feel that definitely boosted my confidence, the approval of wider society, obviously I'll wear it regardless, but it does boost your confidence when other people approve but then it boosts your confidence when people don't approve either…you want to prove to yourself that regardless I'm going to wear this" (Lisa, 21).

And,

> *"There have been occasions when you do feel…anxiety... I do feel it often going out, going to areas that I am not used to or going alone where there is no niqabies. I do feel very anxious …but it also makes me feel more calm cause I feel I am protected when I am wearing it…it just depends on the area I am in" (Lisa, 21).*

This insight highlights that the way others interact and treat Muslims has a direct effect on the individual and the formation of their religious identity (Ali, 2014). Similarly, Mert discussed his experiences when working with Muslims of various ages and their aims to fit in, their self-esteem, and their identity:

> *"I believe one of the major factors is social media, the social network and a lot of the young Muslim kids have low self-esteem because they think that they don't fit into Australia…he doesn't know the difference that he's living in this country or what this country is until he gets to a point where he starts getting abused because of his identity" (Mert, 31).*

Resilience - Despite the discrimination, Sirin spoke of the resilience that is growing among those emerging into adulthood and the support that is provided to them by their community in hopes of building their resilience:

> *"I see the resilience that is coming from being young and invincible like we will be alright which I think is developing that sense of resilience because particularly if they've got very good support networks with each other and knowing who they would go to and because now we are actually paying a lot more attention to be socially cohesive, socially competent, confident these are things that as organisations and as parents becoming very aware of perhaps 50, 20 years ago they are not the conversations that our parents were having with us or needing to have with us, but because there is a certain awareness of threats and dangers and the risks, it's actually helping them build their resilience because of the awareness about it than there ever was" (Sirin, 43).*

Similarly, Sarah spoke of her students:

> *"They would have a sense of belonging in the school because it is an Islamic environment and it's always what they would want to go back into so when they think of university life and "oh my God, there's going to be a lot of non-Muslims", it is a bit scary for them even the thought of it, they don't know what to expect. They think that every second person might throw a racist remark at them or might say something to put them down because they feel that they know that they're not one of them" (Sarah, 23).*

Sarah stated that her students at the Islamic schools have a sense of belonging with the school, however, when they think of environments in which they are the minority, fear does arise. While fears exist, Sirin stated that there is a growing resilience among the new generations of Muslims emerging into adulthood. Sirin went onto state that this is due to the good support networks as well as the conversations that parents and organisations are having with emerging adults.

Similarly, increasing knowledge was presented as a theme with participants discussing the means in which their experiences and fears became a learning curve.

The Learning Curve - On the contrary, Mary spoke of increasing her own knowledge:

> *"It has made me stronger if anything as a Muslim. It has encouraged me to learn more about my religion…it has shaped the way I think. A lot of the stuff that we see on the news and stuff, obviously, when you know a little bit more about your religion then people who are actually telling you what it is, it encourages you to look more deeper into it and to sort of have a deeper understanding so that you can sort of defend yourself if needed" (Mary, 23).*

Likewise,

> *"It actually made me stronger to my religion. It made stronger to Islam. It made me stronger to my Muslim identity because with hatred, you can't fight fire with fire so all we did was smile at those people so if we stuck our fingers up or we swore back maybe we could have enticed them or encouraged them to attack us or do something that would have been a bad experience, but as Muslims, we always need to be nice and if someone does something wrong to you, you need to do good back to them to show them that our religion teaches us not to be bad people, but to be good people, to confront bad with good because anyone can confront good with good, you can be nice to anyone who is nice, but being nice to someone who is actually bad to you is what Islam teaches you, to be nice to them so, my experiences with those bad experiences has been that it's attached me closer to my religion" (Mert, 31).*

Mert's experience adds to negative experiences acting as a learning curve and strengthening participants in their religious understanding and increasing their self-esteem. It also brings forth the need and desire to counteract preconceptions. Muslims who were in roles in student organisations stated that they felt as though they had to prove "we are not terrorists who beat our wives, make women wear scarves and bomb buildings" (Ali, 2014, p. 1254). The participants in Berglund's (2013) study also spoke of setting a good example as a Muslim to contribute towards a positive Muslim image. Similarly,

> *"With everything that has been happening, all the anti-Muslim… everything that's been going on… it makes you become a little stronger in faith and you become more, I don't know if it is more protective or defensive over your faith…I sort of feel that if there are people around me that are non-Muslims and if I see that they feel a bit uneasy on a certain topic or they would feel uncomfortable talking to me about it, I would bring it up and try to explain and find the same ground as them just so they know. I kind of have a responsibility to educate the other person… I try to make sure, the way I communicate with people, I try to make sure that I come across as…I don't know if this an appropriate term, but as normal person...when I'm travelling or approaching people I always try and have a happy face and I smile so I always try and do it in a good way, a kind and nice manner" (Sarah, 23).*

Sarah states that she has become stronger in her religious identity and has put in effort to ensure that although she is a Muslim, she is still 'normal'. Sarah's bid to convey to others that Muslims are normal, might be due to the 'alien ways' that Muslims are depicted (Ali, 2014). Media and politics portray Muslims as being outside secular modernity and as individuals who cannot speak comprehensibly (Ali, 2014). The lack of empowering Muslim images in public and political discourse was highlighted by Ali (2014) who stated that there were few reflections in

US society of a well-rounded educated Muslim despite them being members of society (Ali, 2014). In the Australian context, educated Muslims such as Waleed Aly and Yassmin Abdel-Magied, although represented in media, are continuously securitised and degraded, receiving hate or threats ("*Academic Susan Carland, wife of Waleed Aly, donating $1 to charity for each hate tweet*," 2015; "*Yassmin Abdel-Magied describes herself as 'the most publicly hated Muslim in Australia'*," 2017).

Belonging

Social Identification

Participants aimed to show Islam in a positive light through various behaviours including volunteering:

> *"Actions speak louder than words and actually being involved in the community and doing community work is more beneficial than to just sit there…Getting involved in things that are outside the Islamic community... To actually reach out beyond that. To even just like be nice towards people you know the way we behave, the way that we speak, the way that we interact. Even the posts that we put on Facebook. I got a huge variety of friends even the way I interact people at uni, the groups that I have been involved, the jobs, and a lot of the jobs that I have done have been outside of the Muslim community…I do think that when you look at me you know that I'm a Muslim woman 'cause I'm covered" (Mary, 23).*

Zack spoke of a sense of belonging while volunteering:

> *"I've done a bit of volunteering which gives you more strength in belonging because then you get a sort of purpose in I should do this, I should contribute, I should contribute to society, especially a religious society so I can put in the effort, put in the service for people out there… contributing to organisations that pretty much lead to religious affairs that gives me a sense of belonging because hanging around with those friends especially same viewpoints, that gives me a sense of belonging because we are in the same situation and we are in the same place but in saying that, I do live in an area where there is predominately Muslims, so I do feel this place is comfortable, this place is where I belong…but when I do go out, you do sense that "I don't really think that I belong here"" (Zack, 24).*

Zack's desire to feel a sense of belonging with a group that has similar viewpoints encompasses his need to gain positive regard from others, affection, satisfaction, and coherent involvement with the social world (Gurrentz, 2013). This also allows him to feel connected, respected, and supported (Gurrentz, 2013). When this is put side-to-side with the elements of a sense of belonging, it is seen that by helping the community Zack feels the element of *influence, shared emotional connection* with other members who he considers his friends, and the *membership* or personal relatedness he feels and shares with other members.

A Sense of Belonging

Zack went on to state:

> *"I'm pretty proud of being Australian. Born and raised here... but there is this whole media. When there are times, for example, being or going to a club or going out with friends, have to reject those sorts of things, so your sense of belonging becomes more towards your own sort of crowd, the Muslim crowd…people that don't go to places like that… even though I do have a sense of belonging, there are*

> *times…I, especially for people who are, there's no mosque nearby or they don't support you with your prayers, yes, you do feel like should I go out to a more Muslim-dominated nation. You do feel like that sometimes especially when the office tends to predominately likes to drink alcohol and you want to reject it or they go out to places where they do, and you say no" (Zack, 24).*

Zack's sense of belonging was fluid. This might be due to a clash between his self-defined identity and the environment that he is in. According to Bradatan, Popan, and Melton (2010), one's nationality is discontinuous in everyday experience popping up in certain interactional situations allowing one to experience two different identities in various interactional settings. Similarly, Sarah's self-defined identity clashed with the environment at university. As a result, Sarah transferred to a university at which she was able to experience her self-defined identity without seeming like an outcast, and to feel a sense of belonging:

> *"I went to Monash University, so I was in Caulfield and there was absolutely no Muslims around. I was the only one and I didn't make a lot of friends only because, it was okay for me to an extent, but it was because I didn't really fit in…Our purpose in life was different…after a while I did kind of pull myself out from that environment because it just wasn't for me. I wasn't doing the things that they were going and doing on the weekend, on Friday night, going to drinking and clubbing because that's not a part of my faith obviously, and it's not something I do. I am accepting of other ideas and religions, that didn't necessarily affect me, but that did, later on, it did make me change my circle, so I transferred universities that was probably one of the reasons why I moved" (Sarah, 23).*

Zack and Sarah's experiences highlight that a sense of belonging can be fluid and dependent on the environment. It can be to no surprise that religious practices can change especially during emerging into adulthood (Gurrentz, 2013; Lefkowitz et al., 2004). The individual might be intrinsic with religion (Lefkowitz et al., 2004) and religion can be in the background (Gurrentz, 2013). The individual may resist the notion of the "identity lockbox" (Gurrentz, 2013). They may want to maintain their religious identity preferring to be friends with like-minded individuals (Gurrentz, 2013). As such, Sarah went on to state:

> *"I was born in this country. I grew up in Australia. I have the same education that all the non-Muslims have had. I've been to a public school and I've got my university degree. I try to make sure I can relay that to the person across me… I had that sense of belonging with me, but I always choose my environments according to that too so I know that if I go into a specific environment, if I know that I'm not going to be accepted there because of my identification or the way I portray myself then I would avoid such environments, so I kind of know the groups that I belong in if that makes sense… I don't always approach people because I don't know what they're going to think of me so sometimes I try to keep to myself" (Sarah, 23).*

Similarly,

> *"At the beginning (wearing the niqab) it obviously didn't feel I belonged. It was more like it was them against me and I was like I wouldn't mind going to a country where everyone is like me cause obviously you do feel like you don't fit in. That was at the beginning but after I started to understand that Australia represents multiculturalism, everyone is different and I deserve to be here, I do, I'm educated, I've worked here, my whole life is here I do belong here and I feel like the niqab*

represents Australia multiculturalism because we all talk about accepting one another for who they are and their differences so I do believe I definitely belong here as much as anyone else would... but obviously I don't belong here, I feel like I don't belong at certain times … after I see something in the news, the next day I'm like "I have to be safe outside" I have to try be extra safe or when there's protests and stuff and going out in the city on that day or anywhere just knowing that people are on the loose" (Lisa, 21).

Lisa goes back and forth regarding her sense of belonging in Australia. After negative press about Muslims, Lisa may not feel a sense of membership in the Australian society and she may not feel a sense of physical or emotional safety (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Individuals who have boundaries (feature of membership) to protect their personal space, are often dressed similarly to their groups thereby protecting themselves against threat (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). For Lisa, although her way of dress, identifies her with a group, it does not identify her with the conventional Australian. She can be seen as a threat thereby reducing her sense of belonging in Australia, threatening her and labelling her as an outcast. Media portrayal of her religious identity may also result in Lisa feeling rejected, thereby affecting her emotional safety. Lisa's explanation can be perceived through the media portrayal of Muslims being 'the other' or as a threat to the Australian way of life. In contrast to Lisa's experiences, Ozzie stated:

"My youth, I was prouder in my Australian identity because I belonged… even though I was a Muslim-Australian. I didn't grow up exposed to as much negative publicity about my faith during the most crucial years of growing up, but a lot of the younger ones, all their life...since they are conscious of themselves, they've been hearing so many negative messages about Muslims… When there's constant negative messages about people's religion and their identity they say "I don't belong here anymore." We are getting a lot more young people wanting to go back "home" and the same with why there are sub-groups of the youth here going back to places like Syria and Iraq to fight with terrorists because they feel like "we don't belong here look they call us terrorists" and then they go and join them so it makes you wonder, this whole thing of belonging. All of these are actually fitting into the sense of if you don't make the young people feel like they belong that they are accepted with their religion and with their way of dressing. We always have said that "we are one but we are many, I am you are, we are Australian" but the proof is not in the pudding. It's not showing in the media" (Ozzie, 43).

The Other

The failure of belonging can lead to feelings of social isolation, negative psychological and social outcomes, and various negative behaviours (Gurrentz, 2013; Matindoost, 2015). The absence of engagement and interaction with the wider society, lack of social support or belonging, and unemployment can all be considered a form of alienation (Gurrentz, 2013; Matindoost, 2015).

The form of alienation can be manifested in a number of ways including sensationalist headlines painting sinister images demonising and devaluing Muslims, the sense of fear of Muslims, and the ongoing predominant discourse around the view that Muslims will fail to integrate into Australian society, which all intensifies the clash between the West and Islam as well as the religious identity Muslims in the West have (Matindoost, 2015). Aiding in the amplification of Muslims being seen as the 'other', second-class citizens, or extremists, the usage of Islamophobic sentiments by the media has increased Islam being viewed as supporting war, and violence, and being incompatible with the norms and values of the Western countries that some reside in (Matindoost, 2015). Shows contain racial profiling to over-represent

individuals or groups presumed to be associated with Islam, are demonising all Muslims (Tindongan, 2011). While this notion of the other (or demon) can push one to the edge of society, over two-thirds of students in Ali's (2014) study specifically stated that as Muslims they felt as though they were treated as a part of a "suspect class". As an individual transitions into adulthood, the pain associated with the status of "outsider" continues to grow (Tindongan, 2011). As this marginalisation and misunderstanding grows, the sense of being the other, internal conflict and external contestation increases (Tindongan, 2011). Beckir brought forward his experience:

> *"I had a trip overseas and I was questioned for a fairly good amount of time by the customs as to my reason for having a holiday, which was a little bit of a shock to the system being born and bred here. I consider this place home, so I mean, not just consider it, it is home, so I don't… just being treated like an outsider. I mean even now, obviously this place is home, so I haven't had any issues with that. I think when I was leaving, when I was questioned on my motive as to going and a lot of questions about my background, about my faith, just to see if I did have any extremist views as some would say. That was probably just very eye-opening cause I just didn't expect anything like that. I mean, like I said born and bred here, I just consider myself to be your average Aussie if some would say, just going overseas for a holiday and to be questioned like that, in-depth and to be scrutinised about my religion, it was very eye opening and very upsetting to be honest, but I mean we don't live in a perfect world, so you just have to accept some things for what they are" (Beckir, 26).*

I am Australian

Beckir highlighted the pain associated with being treated as an outsider. He also went on to state:

> *"It's a good point, a reflection point for me to still even, I mean I've experienced all these things, but to look back on them and gain from them, I think that's probably helped me be an even stronger Muslim and even stronger Aussie" (Beckir, 26).*

Conclusion

The findings from this study explored the unique challenges Australian Muslims emerging into adulthood may face. The manner that they are portrayed in the media, popular culture, and by politicians can further add to their challenging transition into adulthood by hampering the development of their identity and their sense of belonging. Similar to research exploring Muslims in various Western countries, participants in this study discussed the effects of the portrayal of Muslims in popular culture and their challenging experiences into adulthood. These included their difficulty with their identity (through their name and physical features), challenges in finding employment, discrimination, and their fears in representing their identity. Public religious affiliation has been shown to have protective effects for emerging adults (Fowler 2008), and the current study supports the importance of feeling able to maintain positive public affiliation practices within community. This study provides a unique perspective into the coping strategies Muslim emerging adults in Australia use to challenge the way that they are portrayed including educating others and volunteering, making conscious decisions about how they represent themselves, seeking support and knowledge to develop their own knowledge, developing resources to support a sense of belonging, and aiming to make an impact by working to educate others. While these findings provide a unique contribution to our understanding on Australian Muslims emerging into adulthood, the experiences of

discrimination directly and indirectly impacting the self-esteem of Australian Muslims emerging into adulthood cannot go overlooked and form a part of the complex life experiences of Muslims in Australia. Given this contribution and insight into Australian Muslims emerging into adulthood, professionals working with Muslims emerging into adulthood should consider the potential impact of representation of religious and social identity of Muslims during their transition into adulthood. To strengthen interventions with this population at a community level, naming and discussing social representations, identity and sense of belonging as well as community volunteering options could better support young adults.

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Trauma Exposure and Substance Use in Journalists: A Narrative Review

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Individuals and teams in the journalism community cover stories relating to death, destruction, and tragedy in society, exposing themselves to potentially traumatic events (PTEs). The aim of this review was to explore: (1) the impact trauma exposure may have on substance use, (2) substance use as a method of coping, and (3) personality profiles that are predictive of substance use. Findings indicate that journalists are exposed to a wide variety of PTEs. Despite substance use being considered a trauma reaction in the broader literature, this connection has not been adequately addressed within journalist samples. The most common substance researched in journalists is alcohol consumption, with few studies considering other substances (e.g., nicotine, caffeine, or illicit substances). Future research with journalist samples could evaluate substance use as a method of coping and incorporate broader theory relating to substance use risk personality profiles. There is a need to bridge the gap that exists between broader trauma and substance use literature and a focus on journalist samples, with the intention of: (1) providing a more holistic understanding of psychosocial issues associated with trauma exposure and substance use to inform diagnosis and treatment, (2) assessing risk and protective factors for this community, (3) informing the development of health promotion and education programs specific to practising journalists and journalistic organisations, and (4) highlighting opportunities for trauma specific education targeted at those training to become a journalist, including protective coping strategies.

Keywords: journalist, substance use, trauma, coping, personality, alcohol

Journalists are an important community group in society as they are relied upon to report matters of the world as they occur, conveying current and factual information on topics such as politics, foreign affairs, and public health. What they report has the power to influence peoples' decisions and behaviours (Infante et al., 2003). The term 'journalist' can cover various roles in the broader journalism community, such as writers, camera-operators, managers, editors, and technical staff (MacDonald et al., 2017). The unique role of a journalist puts them in a position where they are often covering stories relating potentially traumatic events (PTEs), including death, destruction, violence, crime, and tragedy. Applying the broader work of Bonanno and Gupta (2009), researchers have found that journalist reactions to trauma vary and are based on individual differences—one person may experience an event as traumatic, and another may not, so the term PTEs is used (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2012b; MacDonald et al., 2016). Studies that have investigated trauma reactions in journalists have focused on symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; MacDonald, Dale et al., 2021) and depressive symptoms (MacDonald, Hodgins, Saliba et al., 2021). However, substance use is another potential trauma reaction (Konkolÿ Thege et al., 2017) and is additionally found to be comorbid with other psychological disorders (Haller & Chassin, 2014; Perkonigg et al., 2000). Research that has considered substance use typically positions substance use as a method of coping in groups that are subjected to PTEs (Tomaka et al., 2017; Ullman et al., 2013).

Major theories of addiction, such as the stress coping model of addiction (Wills & Shiffman, 1985), the relapse prevention model (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985), and the self-medication hypothesis (Khantzian, 1997) stipulate that stress is a significant contributor to substance use, addiction, and relapse. Journalists are under pressure to be multiskilled; in

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addition to writing, they may also be expected to do camerawork and editing, amongst other demanding tasks (MacDonald & Fox, 2018). They face competitive pressures to find the next story before a competitor does, and must deal with onerous time pressures and deadlines (Monteiro et al., 2016). Some may be reluctant to take time off work or be unwilling to turn down a challenging story for fear that they may lose their job or be replaced (Fedler, 2004; Keats & Buchanan, 2012). Therefore, at least theoretically, journalists are at risk of developing substance use disorders (SUDs; Sinha 2001, 2008). MacDonald, Backholm et al. (2021) found that exposure to personal PTEs was associated with elevated levels of stress using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 2004), whereas work-related PTEs was not. This is relevant because substance use, stress, and exposure to PTEs are theoretically connected and the focus of this paper.

The aim of this review is to understand the types of traumatic events members of the journalism community are exposed to and to explore the impact this trauma exposure may have on their substance use behaviours. This review will then go on to define and look at coping, specifically exploring substance use as a method of avoidant-emotional coping. Finally, in linking the area of journalists' trauma exposure to substance use more broadly, another important factor to consider is personality constructs that are predictive of substance misuse (MacDonald et al., 2016). Therefore, the review will also consider personality profiles (anxiety sensitivity, hopelessness, sensation seeking, and impulsivity) that may be influencing substance use behaviours in journalists. This narrative review focuses on peer-reviewed journal articles with the intention of providing directions for future community psychology research and practice in order to: (1) provide a more holistic understanding of psychosocial issues associated with trauma exposure and substance use to inform diagnosis and treatment, (2) assess risk and protective factors for this community, (3) inform the development of health promotion and education programs specific to practising journalists and journalistic organisations, and (4) highlight opportunities for trauma specific education targeted at those training to become a journalist, including protective coping strategies.

Trauma Exposure Experienced by Journalists

The constant demand for instantaneous up-to-date news means that journalists are often exposed to multiple PTEs. At times they can be a witness to an event arriving at a scene before any first responder emergency services do. The nature of the job can also put journalists in danger and at risk of death, imprisonment, injury, threats, and intimidation (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2020; Feinstein et al., 2002; Monteiro et al., 2016). Not only are they exposed to multiple forms of firsthand and vicarious PTEs professionally, they are also susceptible to the kinds of PTEs members of the general public might ordinarily experience in their personal lives. Research suggests that 80–100% of journalists have been exposed to a PTE through their work (Dworznik, 2011; Feinstein et al., 2002; MacDonald et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2018). Western and global general population studies show PTE exposure rates of 26–90% (Benjet et al., 2016; Breslau et al., 1998; Roberts et al., 2011; Ogle et al., 2014), meaning journalists as a community experience elevated risk of PTEs exposure compared to the general population.

Work-related PTE Exposure

On average, journalists are exposed to 1.72–32.4 PTEs (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2012b; Browne et al., 2012; MacDonald, Backholm et al., 2021; Pyevich et al., 2003). A direct comparison of studies exploring PTEs within this population proves difficult given methodological differences, including the use of different trauma exposure scales. Pyevich et al. (2003) sampled 866 U.S. daily newspaper journalists and found that, on average, participants were exposed to 7.8 PTEs. The most common PTE experienced was road

accidents. Participants reported that the most stressful kinds of stories covered included—injured/dead children (36.1%), murder (11.2%), and road accidents (8.1%). Backholm and Björkqvist (2012b) sampled 407 Finnish journalists and also found the most frequent PTE experienced was road accidents. However, on average their sample was exposed to 1.72 PTEs, which is notably lower than that reported by Pyevich et al. This discrepancy could be due to the comparatively larger size of the U.S. relative to Finland.

Limited research has been conducted in an Australian context. A more recent study conducted by MacDonald, Backholm et al. (2021) found that their sample of international journalists, the majority being based in Australia (73%), were exposed to an average of 9.1 PTEs. The three most common work-related PTEs experienced were injured/dead children, fire, and motor vehicle accidents (MacDonald, Backholm et al., 2021). Lee et al. (2018) sampled 367 Korean journalists. Comparable to Pyevich et al., they found that on average participants were exposed to 7 PTEs; participants were most frequently exposed to fires (73.41%), and the most stressful kind of story covered was ship accidents (42.7%). Notably, participants in this study had recently covered the Sewol ferry accident. Smith et al. (2018) sampled 167 U.S. journalists and also found that fires (67.1%) were the most frequent type of PTE. However, like Pyevich et al., the most stressful PTE to be reported by Smith et al. was dead/injured children. Browne et al. (2012) included a sample of 50 UK journalists and reported that the most common PTE experienced was war zones. Each of the above studies used the Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale (JTES) and of those that provided descriptive statistics for all items, war zones were the least common PTE to be experienced (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2012b; Lee et al., 2018; Pyevich et al., 2003).

The JTES is a 23-item self-report questionnaire, which queries journalists' exposure to PTEs over a specified time period (Pyevich et al., 2003). It requires participants to indicate the range, frequency, and intensity of exposure (Pyevich et al., 2003). Despite the common use of the JTES, direct comparison of findings across studies is difficult due to a range of inconsistent methodological decisions. For example, Lee et al. (2018) made modifications to the 14 types of PTEs experienced to reflect the situation in Korea; 'ship accidents' do not appear as original items on the JTES scale. Browne et al. (2012) added a 15th item to the scale to include 'child abuse/cruelty'.

The Trauma History Questionnaire (THQ; Green 1996) is a self-report questionnaire that measures the exposure to PTEs. It consists of 24 yes/no questions relating to different PTEs experienced, and the number of times experienced (Hooper et al., 2011). Although this scale is not specific to journalists, it has been applied to the study of trauma exposure in journalists. Feinstein and Nicolson (2005) looked at the difference between embedded journalists (those attached to military units), and unilateral journalists (those not associated with the military) covering the Iraq war. The authors found that there was no difference in PTE exposure between these groups. Sinyor and Feinstein (2012) explored gender differences in trauma exposure of war journalists, and found no significant differences in THQ responses. Levaot et al. (2013) explored PTE exposure between Israeli war journalists and Western war journalists. Similar to the other two studies, Levaot et al. found no significant differences between the two groups.

It is clear that individuals within the journalism community are exposed to multiple types of PTEs, however these vary between countries and context. Using scales that are specific to an occupation, such as the JTES, enables a greater understanding of that community group. However, such scales also make it difficult to compare findings with other occupations or the general population (MacDonald et al., 2017). This is also a challenge when authors use non-established scales or informal assessments. Therefore, scales that are not occupation specific, such as the THQ, facilitate comparisons (MacDonald et al., 2017).

As well as work-related exposure to PTEs, journalists are subject to personal exposure to PTEs. However, few studies distinguish between work-related and personal trauma exposure

in journalist samples. It is important to distinguish between the two, as the broader trauma literature outlines that previous exposure to personal trauma is a predictor of negative trauma reactions. Backholm and Björkqvist (2012a) highlight the importance of this in journalist samples. Their study included 196 Finnish journalists covering the Jokela school shooting and found that the level of previous exposure to PTEs positively predicted more distress when covering the school shooting, but previous exposure to work-related PTEs did not.

Trauma Exposure and PTSD Symptoms in Journalists

Symptoms of PTSD in journalists are an important consideration as they are a common trauma reaction, they are also comorbid with substance use, and they provide a broader psychological context for consideration when assessing and treating substance use as a trauma reaction within the journalism community. Those previously exposed to any form of trauma are more likely to experience negative trauma reactions when exposed to subsequent PTEs (Breslau et al., 1999). This has been demonstrated in journalist samples for depressive symptoms (MacDonald, Hodgins et al., 2021) and PTSD symptoms (MacDonald, Dale et al., 2021). Research indicates that the prevalence of PTSD symptoms in journalists ranges from 4.3–43.2% (MacDonald, Dale et al., 2021), which is higher than that of the general population at 7.9% (Aoki et al., 2013; Kessler et al., 1995). Prevalence rates vary between studies due to differences in the measures and samples used, as well as differences in clinical cut-off scores for PTSD.

Using the Impact of Events Scale-Revised (IES-R), Lee et al. (2018) found a 43.2% prevalence rate for PTSD symptoms in their sample of 367 Korean journalists, which is one of the highest figures recorded for journalists. The authors note that what may have influenced such an elevated prevalence rate could have been the large proportion of participants who had recently covered the Sewol ferry accident (73.6%). Lee et al. used a PTSD clinical cut-off score of 25, which they outline as standard practice in Eastern studies (Hatanaka et al., 2010). However, other Western studies conducted in the U.S. that utilise the PTSD Checklist (PCL) to measure the prevalence of PTSD symptoms use a more conservative clinical cut-off of 44. Pyevich et al. (2003) found a prevalence rate of 4.3% in their sample of journalists, Dworznik (2011) found a prevalence rate of 7.14% in their sample of TV news workers, and Smith et al. (2018) found a prevalence of 9.7% in their sample of news journalists. Notably, MacDonald, Dale et al. (2021) found that their sample of 117 international TV news camera operators had a prevalence rate of 16.2%, which is higher than any other study within this area. This suggests that TV news camera operators experience elevated symptoms of PTSD compared to other roles within the journalism community. However, it should be noted that although the sample consisted of international journalists, the majority were Australian so the generalisability of the findings should be considered when drawing conclusions.

Future research should involve collaboration with community and clinical researchers to establish the most appropriate cut-off when exploring symptoms of PTSD in journalists. Journalists' exposure to work-related and personal trauma is well-established in the literature. A large proportion of the literature focuses on symptoms of PTSD as a trauma reaction. However, when exposed to a PTE, between 4.3–43.2% of journalists experience symptoms of PTSD, demonstrating that many journalists do not experience symptoms of PTSD (MacDonald, Dale et al., 2021). This highlights the potential role for community researchers and practitioners to evaluate sources of social capital that can be further engaged and mobilised to support individuals who may be at elevated risk of developing PTSD symptoms. It is beyond the scope of this paper to further explore social capital. However, MacDonald and Fox (2018) found that social capital among journalists reduces physical and psychological risks. Social capital in the form of mentoring and protective behaviours from more experienced and

established news workers can serve as a buffer for journalists exposed to PTEs and other work-related stressors (MacDonald & Fox, 2018).

Substance Use Behaviours in Journalists

Due to the nature of the job, the journalism community has been stereotyped as being made up of regular drinkers, as they frequently perform their job in social places where alcohol is consumed (Cosper & Hughes, 1982). Alcohol consumption is also embedded and accepted in journalist culture. In an interview conducted by Seely (2019, p. 254), one reporter states: "There was a time when I drank a lot. But we're reporters, we're supposed to drink". A study conducted by Joseph (1983) found that journalists were more than twice as likely to suffer from alcoholism compared to the general public; this is the only study to look at alcoholism in journalists and was conducted some time ago. Over the years awareness, availability, and patterns of alcohol consumption have evolved, so whether Joseph's findings are still relevant today is unclear. This provides a potential space for further development, evaluating current consumption trends within the journalism community and using it to inform support service work and develop educational programs that are tailored to this community group and reflect the aforementioned changes in awareness and consumption observed in the broader population.

The majority of earlier trauma exposure and substance use research in journalists has been conducted by Feinstein and colleagues and assessed by measuring the quantity of alcohol consumed as well as the risk associated with this use. Journalists were asked how many units of alcohol they consumed in a week. Feinstein et al. (2002, p. 1571) defined a unit of alcohol as "either a regular size bottle of beer, glass of wine or shot of spirits". The authors used Canadian guidelines for safe alcohol consumption (Bondy et al. 1999), which sets a maximum of 14 units for males and 9 units for females per week. In their sample of 140 war journalists, Feinstein et al. (2002) found that males and females consumed 14.7 and 10.8 units of alcohol per week respectively; these figures are in excess of the guidelines for safe alcohol consumption in both groups and are 2–3 times more than non-war journalists. In Feinstein and Nicolson's (2005) study on embedded and unilateral journalists covering the Iraq war, the authors found that embedded male and female journalists consumed 15.1 and 12 units of alcohol per week respectively, and unilateral male and female journalists consumed 12.8 and 6.9 units per week respectively. Although embedded journalists consumed more alcohol per week, no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups. This suggests that frequency of consumption could be an important consideration, and worth contemplating in future research. Both studies suggest that male journalists consume more alcohol than their female counterparts. It is important to note that different countries will have their own guidelines for safe alcohol consumption.

MacDonald et al. (2016) conducted a systematic literature review on substance use behaviours in journalists synthesising research conducted prior to 2013 (n = 10). The review found that only two studies assessed nicotine use (Feinstein & Nicolson, 2005; Feinstein & Owen, 2002) and none had assessed caffeine use. Cannabis use is documented in the literature and authors report prevalence rates for war journalists (24.3%; Feinstein & Owen, 2002), and comparisons between embedded journalists (18.4%) and unilateral journalists (12.8%; Feinstein & Nicolson, 2005), and war journalists (23.1%) and Mexican journalists (7.6%; Feinstein; 2013). Illicit substance use has been reported in a number of studies (Feinstein, 2013; Feinstein et al., 2002; Feinstein & Nicolson, 2005; Feinstein & Owen, 2002). However, some do not provide descriptive statistics for specific substances, and only two studies report prevalence rates. Feinstein (2013) reported that 5.6% of war journalists and 2.9% of Mexican journalists use substances such as amphetamines, cocaine, barbiturates, and heroin. Feinstein and Owen (2002) reported that 6.4% of war journalists used illicit drugs, such as cocaine and

amphetamines. Without associated descriptive statistics it is difficult to compare with other journalist samples, occupation groups, and the general population (MacDonald et al., 2016).

Since the review by MacDonald et al. (2016), only three studies have explored substance use in journalists. Weekly units of alcohol consumption were recorded, where a unit of alcohol was defined as per previous studies discussed, and safe alcohol consumption was also based on guidelines set by Bondy et al. (1999). Feinstein and Starr (2015) explored the psychological wellbeing of Western journalists reporting on the conflict in Syria. Again, men on average consumed more alcohol (11.56) than women (10.3), however only women exceeded the upper limit of safe consumption. Feinstein et al. (2015) investigated the psychological health of journalists in Kenya and found that men and women consumed 4.8 and 2.18 units of alcohol per week respectively. The authors did not find that substance use was comorbid with other psychological disorders, which is otherwise well-established in the literature (Blanco et al., 2013).

Feinstein et al. (2016) explored the psychological wellbeing of 114 Iranian journalists. Men consumed an average of 4.18 units of alcohol and women consumed an average of 2.31 units of alcohol per week, similar to rates reported by Feinstein et al. (2015). Feinstein et al. (2016) reported other drug use rates ranging between 1.8%–2.7%, for cannabis, heroin, LSD, and cocaine use. The authors also reported a high barbiturate use of 30.6%, a sedative that induces muscle relaxation. The high use of barbiturates suggests that they are more readily available in Iran compared to other substances. In Western populations, barbiturates are rarely prescribed due to addictive potential and risk of fatal overdose (Weaver, 2015).

As outlined above, substance use in journalists consistently explores alcohol consumption with demographic comparisons being of focus, while other substances are often neglected (MacDonald et al., 2016). There are some exceptions, such as Feinstein et al. (2016) who report illicit substance use, but without descriptive data. This could have been because participants were not as forthcoming about illicit substance use compared to alcohol use. Alcohol consumption in Kenyan journalists was not found to be comorbid with other psychological disorders, comparable to findings of Feinstein et al. (2016) with Iranian journalists. This suggests that culture plays a role in alcohol consumption; alcohol is more widely accepted in Western cultures compared to African or Middle Eastern cultures (Richie & Roser, 2018). Alternatively, it could be that there are differences in presentation and assessment of mental disorders across cultures and geographical regions.

It is notable that the substance use in journalists literature has not to date compared journalists' substance use to that of other occupation groups or the general population; without these comparisons it is difficult to ascertain if substance use is an area that requires further consideration in this community (MacDonald et al., 2016). It is also surprising that no-one seems to have explored the potential association between trauma exposure and substance use in journalists, despite (1) the elevated risk of PTE exposure in journalists and, (2) this association having been established in general population (Khoury et al., 2010; Konkolÿ Thege et al., 2017) and clinical samples (Kuksis et al., 2017).

Coping Motives in Journalists

When considering motives for substance use, the literature suggests that journalists use substances as a method of coping (Buchanan & Keats, 2011; Keats & Buchanan, 2012; MacDonald et al., 2016; Monteiro et al., 2016). Coping is defined as a regulatory process that can stabilise and reduce negative feelings associated with stressful situations (Afshar et al., 2015). A number of coping strategies that journalists employ when faced with PTEs have been identified, including: (1) social support—talking to family, significant others, or therapists, (2) disconnecting, such as exercising, (3) remembering job purpose, (4) substance use and risky behaviour (Buchanan & Keats, 2011; Monteiro et al. 2016; Seely, 2019).

Greenberg et al. (2009) included 124 journalists to explore their views on PTSD and associated help-seeking behaviours. The researchers found that participants were more likely to reach out to family or friends for support, and least likely to turn to managers or therapists. These results indicate that journalists do not feel comfortable seeking professional help or reaching out to their superiors, however the authors draw no concrete conclusions as to why this is. Feinstein et al. (2002) indicate that there is a "culture of silence" (p. 1574) within the news reporting community. Keats and Buchanan (2009) report journalists do not seek help and silence their distress for fear of being perceived as weak and unable to cope. Community researchers and practitioners could consult groups of journalists in various media organisations to evaluate their psychosocial and systemic environment and gain further insights, especially with respect to social support networks. This would enable researchers and practitioners to: (1) collaborate directly with journalists in the area of capacity building and addressing specific risks, and (2) developing context specific interventions and education programs aimed at improving individual and organisation wellness.

Coping and Substance Use in Journalists

When journalists are forced to suppress their distress other unhealthy coping strategies may be adopted, such as substance use (Keats & Buchanan, 2012). Seely's (2019) interview study revealed that some reporters drink alcohol at elevated levels when their work assignments are emotionally taxing. Research has indicated a positive association between avoidant coping and substance use (Aldridge-Gerry et al., 2011; Digdon & Landry, 2013; Lyness & Koehler, 2016), further suggesting that journalists are at greater risk of substance use disorders compared to the general population.

When considering avoidant-emotional coping, a common strategy is the use of alcohol and other substances. The Drinking Motives Model (Cooper, 1994) proposes that individuals may consume alcohol to: (1) increase their positive affect through social motives, (2) increase their positive affect through enhancement motives, or (3) reduce negative affect. Of these three, drinking to cope is of primary concern because it is most likely to be associated with substance misuse (Mackinnon et al., 2014; Moran & Saliba, 2011). This theoretical explanation, although specific to alcohol, has been found to be transferable to other substances, such as cannabis (Cooper et al., 2016). Tobacco use and caffeine consumption have also been identified as coping mechanisms (Lawless et al., 2015; Šabić & Mujanović, 2019). Applying the theory behind the self-medication hypothesis (Khantzian, 1997), this form of coping within journalist populations is characterised by the need to self-medicate in an effort to alleviate and numb adverse experiences associated with trauma reactions (Buchanan & Keats, 2011; Feinstein et al., 2016; Keats & Buchanan, 2012; Monteiro et al., 2016). It is noteworthy that some psychological disorders are intensified by substance use (Kaysen et al., 2011; Smith et al. 2018; Shah et al., 2020) and so this avoidant coping strategy is particularly risky for individuals with a pre-existing disorder.

There are many different theories on coping, but one of the first and most influential was developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) who defined two major coping categories: (1) emotion-focused coping—regulating emotions when faced with something stressful, and (2) problem-focused coping—managing the problem. However, other researchers have argued that there are more than two coping categories. For example, Carver et al. (1989) developed a new coping measure and found statistical support for three factors: emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and avoidant-emotional coping. Avoidant-emotional coping is characterised by avoidance of dealing with the stressor and as such denies a solution being reached (Carver et al., 1989). While problem-focused and emotional coping are considered protective and associated with psychological well-being (Meyer, 2001), avoidant-emotional

coping can be harmful in the long-term; those who tend towards this coping style have been found to have higher levels of perceived stress (Thompson et al., 2010).

With these three coping strategies in mind, Carver et al. first developed the Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE) Inventory which is a 60-item scale with 15 sub-scales (1989) and later developed a shorter version of the COPE called the Brief COPE (1997). The Brief COPE is a 28-item self-report questionnaire that uses a 4-point Likert scale ('I usually don't do this at all' to 'I usually do this a lot') to assess different coping styles (Carver, 1997). The items can be grouped into three subscales: (1) problem-focused coping, (2) emotional coping, and (3) avoidant-emotional coping. This measure has been used in studies involving the general population as well as in journalist samples (Schnider et al., 2007; Shah, 2020; Smith et al., 2018). All three subscales have shown good internal consistency (α = .80–.88; Schnider et al., 2007).

In their study of 367 Korean journalists, Lee et al. (2018) explored coping strategies using the Stress Coping Scale (Carver, 1997). Although not explicitly stated, what the authors refer to as the Stress Coping Scale appears to be congruent with the Brief COPE. They found that journalists adopting avoidant coping strategies to reduce emotional distress (such as drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and self-blame) had greater symptoms of PTSD. Consistent with Lee et al., both Smith et al. (2018) who sampled 167 U.S. news journalists, and Shah et al. (2020) sampling 236 journalists in Pakistan, found (using the Brief COPE) that avoidant-emotional coping was associated with statistically significant elevated PTSD symptoms. These studies highlight journalists use of avoidant coping strategies in the context of increasing symptoms of PTSD.

However, what is missing from the literature is an exploration of substance use specifically as a method of coping, which has been considered in other populations. Ullman et al. (2013) sampled 1863 sexual assault victims in the U.S. and explored the connection between trauma exposure and substance use to cope. Using the Brief COPE, the researchers found that elevated lifetime exposure to trauma was significantly associated with increased use of substances to cope (r = .36, p < .001). Other research including 740 U.S. firefighters explored substance use coping via the Brief COPE (Tomaka et al., 2017) and reported a significant positive correlation between PTSD symptoms and substance use coping (r = .40, p < .001). Both studies use the self-medication hypothesis (Khantzian, 1997) to explain their results. Although using different samples, both studies suggest that those exposed to trauma and/or experiencing negative trauma reactions are at an increased risk of using substances to cope. As both studies were conducted in the U.S., some level of caution should be taken when making generalisations outside of this context and to other population groups.

However, it is reasonable to suggest that the journalism community may be particularly susceptible to using substances to cope. Future research should be directed in this area to fill the gap within the literature and understand if these associations are found in journalists. Research investigating journalists and substance use coping is limited; however, in the broader trauma literature and dominant theoretical perspectives, substance use as a method of coping is clearly established. Other motives for substance use behaviours are outlined in the broader substance use literature and include specific personality profiles, which the following section will explore.

The Role of Personality in Substance Use Behaviours

Personality is predictive of substance use and a contributing risk factor for substance use disorders (Afshar et al., 2015). Specific personality profiles that include neurotic tendencies and deficits in behavioural inhibition tend to be associated with substance use (Malmberg et al., 2010). These personality traits have been identified as strong risk factors for elevated patterns of substance use and motivations for use, as well as risk factors for different types of

SUDs and vulnerabilities to comorbid psychopathology (Castellanos-Ryan et al., 2013; Castellanos-Ryan & Conrod, 2012; Woicik et al., 2009). A scale that specifically measures these personality profiles is the Substance Use Risk Profile Scale (SURPS; Woicik et al., 2009). The SURPS is a 23-item questionnaire with four subscales assessing personality traits that are associated with an increased risk of substance misuse: anxiety sensitivity, hopelessness, impulsivity, and sensation seeking. Participants respond to each item using a four-point Likert scale ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'). Hopley and Brunelle (2015) report good internal consistency for the SURPS subscales (α = .71–.78).

Anxiety sensitivity is defined as a fear of anxiety-related physical sensations (Reiss et al., 1986). High levels of anxiety sensitivity is associated with coping motives for substance use (Stewart & Kushner, 2001), high levels of problem drinking, smoking, and sedative use (Conrod et al., 2000 Conrod et al., 1998). Sensation seeking is associated with the need for stimulation, a low tolerance to boredom, and willingness to take risks (Arnett, 1994; Woicik et al., 2009); it is associated with an increase in substance use behaviours to enhance positive affect (Comeau et al., 2001; Conrod et al., 2000; Cooper et al., 1995). Impulsivity is associated with rapid decision making (Krueger et al., 2002) and the inability to control behaviour (Woicik et al., 2009); it has been linked to high-risk behaviours, problem drinking, and stimulant and polysubstance use (Conrod et al., 2000; Finn et al., 2005; Jackson & Sher; 2003).

Finally, hopelessness refers to holding negative views about the self and the world, and is characterised by low mood and worthlessness (Castellanos & Conrod, 2006); it is associated with increases in alcohol consumption and opioid use as a method of coping to reduce negative affect (Woicik et al., 2009). This trait is particularly pertinent when considering groups that may be using substances as a result of trauma exposure and that may have comorbid PTSD or depressive symptoms. One of the outcomes of trauma exposure is a cognitive shift towards viewing the world and other people as dangerous and unsafe (Janoff-Bulman, 1989); this relationship has been established in journalists (Pyevich et al., 2003). Finally, one of the diagnostic criteria for major depressive disorder is a sense of hopelessness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Journalists are at an elevated risk of trauma exposure as well as PTSD and depressive symptoms (MacDonald et al., 2017, MacDonald, Backholm et al., 2021, MacDonald, Dale et al., 2021).

In a systematic literature review conducted by MacDonald et al. (2016), the authors recommend the application of the SURPS in journalist samples as this would allow: (1) a more specific understanding of factors associated with substance use compared to other broader models of personality, and (2) the implementation of specific personality-targeted interventions for the prevention and treatment of SUDs (Conrod, 2016). Therefore, application of the SURPS in the journalism community may improve the quality and potential outcomes of research within this area (MacDonald et al., 2016). Currently, there is no existing research that explores substance use risk personality profiles in journalists, highlighting a gap within the literature. However, this well-established theory has been applied, validated, and well-documented in adolescent (Jurk et al., 2015) and adult populations (Hopley & Brunelle, 2015; Schlauch et al., 2015).

Conclusion

This narrative review explored and evaluated research investigating trauma exposure in the journalism community. The majority of research reviewed comprised peer reviewed journal articles, with the aim of understanding the type of trauma journalists are typically exposed to and how this may impact their substance use behaviours. Substance use was considered as a trauma reaction and as a method of coping. Personality profiles that may predict substance use behaviours were also considered. The review has focused on peer-reviewed literature with the intention of suggesting directions for future research and to inform the

diagnosis and treatment of journalists. A limitation to this review is the lack of accessibility of relevant literature in this area published in languages other than English.

The current review highlights that journalists are exposed to a wide variety of PTEs. The specific type of PTE and how stressful it is varied. Most studies found that covering road accidents and fires were the most frequently experienced work-related PTE; war zones were generally the least common. However, specific types of PTEs differ between countries and related contextual factors. Making direct comparisons between studies proves difficult due to differences in methodology. A distinction between work-related trauma from personal trauma is not consistently found in the literature; this is an important distinction because those previously exposed to trauma are more likely to experience negative trauma reactions when exposed to subsequent PTEs. Despite elevated levels of trauma exposure, many journalists do not experience symptoms of PTSD and this highlights the potential role for community researchers and practitioners to evaluate sources of social capital that can be further engaged and mobilised to support individuals who may be at elevated risk of developing PTSD symptoms.

Alcohol consumption is the most common substance assessed in journalist samples. War journalists are more likely to drink excessively compared to non-war journalists, and males drink more than females. Few studies considered journalists use of nicotine or illicit substances, and caffeine consumption does not appear in the existing literature. The concern here is that maintaining the narrow focus on alcohol consumption skews our understanding of substance use and serves to reduce the capacity of psychological services to support individuals who may not adopt alcohol as a means of substance use related coping. Further research into various types of caffeine consumption in addition to coffee (e.g., energy drinks) and nicotine use in addition to cigarettes (e.g., vaping) could provide meaningful insights and a more holistic and nuanced understanding of substance use coping behaviours and outcomes. Comparing journalists' illicit substance use across studies and to other community groups is difficult because studies with journalist samples have not typically reported descriptive statistics. Comparisons between journalist samples and other high-risk occupations, clinical groups, and the general population are desirable in the endeavour to determine if substance use is elevated amongst journalists in a clinically and practically significant way.

Some notable areas for future research are apparent. Personality, specifically substance use related traits, have been shown to be predictive of substance use behaviours. However, these traits are yet to be explored in journalist samples. Scales, such as the SURPS should be applied to journalist samples to explore the role personality has in substance use behaviours of this unique occupational group. Finally, there is limited research exploring substance use as a trauma reaction in journalists. Studies including other high-risk groups have found a positive association between trauma exposure and substance use. Substance use is identified as a form of coping, generally associated with an avoidant coping style, to deal with occupational stressors and as a way to alleviate symptoms of various types of trauma reactions (e.g., depressive disorders and PTSD). An exploration of the association between trauma exposure and substance use in journalists that accounts for the most relevant personality traits may bridge the gap that exists within the literature to better inform diagnosis and treatment of this group. It may also serve to guide community researchers and practitioners in consulting with key members or organisations within the journalism community to co-design health promotion and education programs specific to this community's context and that raise awareness about healthy behaviours and individual wellness. Other implications include increasing opportunities for trauma specific education targeted at those studying and training to become a journalist, including protective coping strategies.

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