# Muslim Identities in Contemporary Britain: The Case of Muslim Religious Education Teachers

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# Abstract

In light of *Preventing Violent Extremism* policies and the promotion of Fundamental British Values, there has been a growth of academic and political interest surrounding Muslim identities in British education. Subsequent debate has revealed tensions surrounding Muslims and Islam within these educational contexts, leading to concern about the extent to which Muslims can incorporate their 'Muslimness'. Surprisingly however, scant attention has been paid to Muslim teachers in these debates, who are tasked with embodying both. Given their unique positioning as interlocutors between the state and Muslims in schools, their experiences and perspectives can therefore shed new light on these debates.

This thesis attends to this lacuna by exploring the experiences and identities of 'Muslim RE teachers'. These are Muslims who work as non-confessional teachers of Religious Education in secondary state schools in England. Their explicit concerns with religion, both personally and professionally, entail that they are well-positioned to illuminate the processes of identity construction as Muslims within English school contexts. Accordingly, the study explores how 'Muslim RE teachers' understand and construct their personal and professional identities, the way others influence this construction, and how this is achieved in their everyday working practice, to highlight potential synergies and tensions between the two. It draws on interviews and shadowing with 21 participants across England working in a variety of secondary schools, making this study one of the largest qualitative studies of Muslim teachers to date. Through this exploration I argue that despite tensions, their attributes as 'Muslims' and as 'RE teachers' were not as incompatible as initially conceived, revealing the capacity of these participants to construct teacher identities that incorporated their faith. In doing so, my findings draw attention to the limitations of academic conceptualisations of Muslim identities, particularly within education.

The study therefore provides a significant contribution to current academic debates surrounding Muslims in education. It also contributes to the fields of sociology of religion and British Muslim Studies more widely. This research should also inform current scholarship in education surrounding professional development, and teacher training for RE teachers. Consequently, the study makes original contributions to the discussions of both British Muslim identity and RE teaching in Britain.

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This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.


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# Acknowledgements

# Contents

# List of Figures

# List of Abbreviations

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

DfE – Department for Education

EBacc – English Baccalaureate

FBVs - Fundamental British Values

ITT – Initial Teacher Training

LEA - Local Educational Authority

PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate in Education

PLK – Pedagogical Life Knowledge

PSHCE – Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship education

RE - Religious Education

RI – Religious Instruction

SACRE – Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

SLT - Senior Leadership Teams

SMSC – Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

# Chapter 1: Introduction



Figure 1.1 – *Mrs Khan's classroom door*
(Fieldwork, March 2017).



Figure 1.2 – *Mr Jones' "Ramadan station"* (Fieldwork, June 2017).

Pictured above are two snapshots of fieldwork conducted with 'Muslim RE (Religious Education) teachers'. Figure 1.1 is Mrs Khan's door, depicting a 3-foot by 2-foot poster of Abdulla Yusef Ali's translation of the Qur'an. This was Mrs Khan's "favourite book" and so for World Book Week she had chosen this text for a poster marking the entrance to her classroom. In doing so, Mrs Khan made a clear statement of her Muslim identity within her professional role as a Religious Education (RE) teacher within her school context. She was one of a handful of participants in this study who actually identified as a 'Muslim RE teacher'.

In contrast, Figure 1.2 is Mr Jones' "Ramadan station". Hidden amongst the rigging of the school stage, Mr Jones retreated here in his lunch breaks during Ramadan to pray, to read and reflect from his prayer book (hidden in the sleeve of a text on the English Reformation), and occasionally to have a nap. As a white male convert working in a predominantly white, leafy grammar school in the South East of England, Mr Jones felt that he should, and had to, hide his Muslim identity in order to be an RE teacher within his school context. Here he had literally created a private "Muslim space" for himself within the confines of his 'secular' working environment. Mr Jones was also one of the many participants who contested the idea of the 'Muslim RE teacher', preferring the label 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' instead.

By juxtaposing figures 1.1 and 1.2, we can see vastly different experiences of being Muslim in the role of the RE teacher in English secondary schools. This begs the question as to why these pictures

were so different. This research explores the experiences of being Muslim by critically examining 'Muslim RE teachers' working in English secondary schools. The purpose of this exploration is to uncover the processes, successes, and challenges that these Muslims experienced managing their faith within the English education system. To do so, my project examines three main questions:

1. *What is the relationship between 'Muslim RE teachers'' faith and their professional role in their school contexts?*

2. *How did this identity construction occur in practice?*

3. *What were the synergies and tensions between these attributes of their workplace identities?*

These questions focus on the relationship between their personal faith and their professional role. Focussing on this relationship illuminates the extent to which their Muslim identity, or 'Muslimness', could be incorporated within their broadly 'secular' school contexts and their construction of their professional teacher identities. This approach is inspired by Gilliat-Ray, Pattison, and Ali (2013), whose work with Muslim chaplains has drawn attention to the capacity of Muslims to incorporate the Islamic tradition within the policy frameworks of British public institutions through a newly created professional role. In this way, the present work sits within a developing approach to Muslim identities from 'lived' and 'everyday' perspectives (Liebelt & Werbner, 2018) - in this case relating to their work as non-confessional RE teachers.

This research is extremely timely given the proliferation of academic and policy interest surrounding Muslims within educational contexts, especially alongside the implementation of the *Prevent* policy assemblage. This interest reflects increasing concerns surrounding the position of Muslims within a now securitised, and occasionally hostile, educational environment. Surprisingly, however, the perspectives of Muslim teachers are noticeably absent from this debate. So far it has focussed almost solely on the views of Muslim pupils and, to a lesser extent, parents. More widely, the study of Muslim teachers has been positioned as a 'new Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) sub-field' (Shah & Shaikh, 2010), attesting to the increasing scholarly recognition that these actors represent a unique and important intersection between religion, ''race'', and the machineries of the education system.

These intersections are exemplified by these 'Muslim RE teachers' because of the subject that they teach, with RE evoking aspects of religion, beliefs, and values explicitly within their 'secular' school contexts and policy frameworks. For example, Farrell's (2016) work involving four 'Muslim RE teachers' elicits the complexities of their positioning as Muslims and as RE teachers in relation to the values-discourse of FBVs. Their 'fragile identities' are contingent and constantly re-constructed in

terms of the various normative discourses which now infuse the British educational context. Everington (2014, 2015) and her studies involving three 'Muslim RE teachers' has begun a conversation about the implications of minority faith identity in terms of their predominantly white, 'secular' notions[1] of teacher professionalism within RE. Both perspectives draw attention to the unique challenge that 'Muslim RE teachers' face in embodying both a marginalised and 'othered' personal faith identity and the dominant apparatus of power within schools. However, my project develops these insights by considering not only a much larger and more diverse sample of 21 'Muslim RE teachers', in terms of school contexts and career phase, but also presents a more holistic and sophisticated account of their identity construction across the intersections of 'race', faith, and their notions of professionalism and practice as RE teachers, which, as I argue in the Literature Review, is currently lacking. Given these intersections they represent a significant case of Muslim actors in these educational debates, as interlocutors between the State, religion, Muslimness, and educational values and aspirations.

At the time of submission in autumn 2018, the present work is the largest qualitative study of 'Muslim RE teachers' to date and amongst the largest of Muslim teachers more widely. My findings are therefore significant given the current lacuna of Muslim teachers within these fields. These findings contribute to these wider debates surrounding the place of Muslim identities within the English education system, and, moreover, notions of British Muslim identity itself. There are three specific contributions that are argued for in this thesis.

Firstly, the exploration of their identities as 'Muslim RE teachers' presents a more sophisticated account of agency than that currently articulated in the literature. The participants' understanding of their teacher identities reflect their goals and desires to be both Muslims *and* RE teachers, contesting the category of the 'Muslim RE teacher' itself and the notion that they were 'Muslim first'. For this reason, I have placed 'Muslim RE teachers' in quotation marks throughout, reminding the reader that this is just placeholder for the initial focus of inquiry and that this label is contested. As I discuss in Chapter 5, this label arguably misrepresents the participants.

From this, the second significant finding is the degree to which the participants act as bricoleurs in the construction of their identities, playing with the codes of Muslimness and notions of RE teacher professionalism. Utilising a lived religion perspective broadens the analytical scope of what constitutes Muslimness, looking beyond the physical and visible practices that are the focus of the

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[1] The contested nature of the 'secular' school is discussed further in Chapter 2.

wider literature towards a more implicit and subtle repertoire. I propose that this has significant conceptual implications for the study of British Muslims more generally.

Finally, an examination of the synergies and tensions between their faith and professional role in this relationship uncovers how the eschatological forms part of 'Muslim RE teachers' working contexts. These insights can inform support and training for Muslim teachers from a new perspective, attending to current critiques about the lack of representation and the unique challenges that Muslims experience in the wider teaching workforce.

In this introductory chapter I begin with the scope and limitations of this research, followed by a brief statement of my own positioning as the researcher and the values that I bring to this study. I then conclude with an outline of the thesis chapters. Following this outline, in the next chapter I provide an account of the current context of Muslims in education, highlighting the precariousness of Muslim identities within schools. I then map the current state of RE and scholarship on the experience of Muslims within it. These two intersecting contexts form the background in which this research and the participants are situated.

## 1.0 Scope and Limitations

Given the complexities of these participants' identities across vectors of 'race', religion, gender, class, and concepts of teacher identity, it has been necessary to limit the scope of the present discussion. The analysis presented here focusses on aspects of faith and professional identity in order to explore the relationship between them. This focus enables a nuancing of the current scholarly representation of Muslims within education and more widely. By virtue of this focus, I have had to pay less attention to other aspects of their experience. My intention is that other significant avenues of inquiry will be explored in subsequent papers and journal articles outside of the present thesis.

There are three areas that are limited in their engagement in the present discussion. Firstly, I have largely eschewed discussions of Islam itself. By this I mean that I have resisted the tendency to go into theological debates surrounding the beliefs and practices that the participants held. This is in contrast to a large body of scholarship that has sought to approach the experiences of Muslims in education from an Islamic theological perspective to elucidate their values (c.f Halstead, 2004; Shah, 2009, 2016, 2018). As I discuss in the Methodology, this kind of approach was not in keeping with the lived religion methodology and theoretical underpinning of this research. Whilst aspects of theology, beliefs, and practices are encountered in the proceeding discussion, this is approached

from the perspective of the participants' understanding of them as opposed to a theologically normative standpoint.

Secondly, and reluctantly, my engagement with the participants' experiences of racism are limited. Throughout the data collection phase of my study, accounts of racialisation and racism were commonplace, and their experiences of discrimination are important to recognise. Within the present study, I have incorporated these experiences within the purview of a wider analysis where it was a factor in their construction of their teacher identities. However, this has meant that an in-depth exploration of the manifestations of racialisation and racism itself and the nuances in which they understood and managed these experiences is not present here, as I have tried to contend with these different intersections. Again, this contrasts with the wider literature which has leaned toward the impact of 'race' and racism in the lives of Muslims in schools.

Finally, readers may be surprised to find that there is remarkably little discussion of *Prevent* and FBVs. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, and surprisingly, this is because neither *Prevent* nor FBVs formed a significant part of the data. As I discuss in Chapter 5, I tentatively suggest that these policies were not as impactful as scholarship suggests on the experiences and identity construction of the teachers involved in my project. This is a fascinating finding in and of itself and is worthy of further investigation by others, but my engagement with reasons for this is limited. Secondly, given the current proliferation of literature about these policies, I wanted to see if it was possible to talk about Muslims outside of the auspices of *Prevent*. This motivation came from a series of discussions between myself and other academics and educationalists at a one-day symposium: *Islam, Muslims, and Education in Britain* (Vince & Sidat, 2018). This event highlighted other aspects and potentials of the Muslim experience of education outside of the *Prevent*/FBV debate. As such, in the proceeding discussion *Prevent* and FBVs is situated within wider notions of teacher professionalism and their daily working lives.

## 1.1 Reflexivity and the Researcher's Positioning

Readers may be asking why I decided to conduct this research. This is an important question given the way in which the researcher is embedded within the research process itself. Attia and Edge (2017, p. 34) write that:

> Qualitative research demands an empathic ability to relate to social and psychological realities other than one's own... furthermore, it requires both the kind of humility that acknowledges that the researcher always has a standpoint, and the kind of openness that is prepared to risk having that standpoint changed.

The qualitative researcher therefore brings their own moral, ethical, and biographical standpoint to the phenomena under investigation, exerting a degree of influence, intentionally or unintentionally, over the research design and findings. The inclusion of the researcher's own moral, ethical, and biographical positioning toward the research therefore increases its rigour, explicating the experiences, values, and assumptions that they brought with them (Attia & Edge, 2017). By providing a brief sketch of my own biography and positioning I hope to lay bare such values and assumptions, prior to further discussions of reflexivity and positioning in the Methodology chapter.

Perhaps the best place to begin is with a brief reflection on my own experiences of education and RE teaching, both of which underpin this thesis. At the time of writing I am a 29-year-old white male born into a low-income household in the South West of England. Whilst my family are themselves Christian, I am non-religious, "losing" my faith during my teenage years. I have achieved educational success, attending grammar school and then gaining a First Class degree in Ethics, Philosophy and Religion at Lancaster University. This was followed by receipt of a Jameel Scholarship to undertake the MA 'Islam in Contemporary Britain' at Cardiff University, and then a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Secondary RE. During this journey I have developed an academic and personal interest in Islam and Muslims, especially surrounding the holistic link between knowledge (*ilm*) and character (*adab*), and, from this, matters of education. My year of RE teaching in an Anglican-Catholic faith school in the South West of England was an extremely interesting time for me, personally and professionally. From this experience I knew the project was feasible and important.

The idea for the thesis emerged during my PGCE. It was during my training that I became aware of the unique challenges of managing one's own personal beliefs within RE teaching. I felt as though I had to develop the skill of putting my non-religiosity "on hold" to become "neutral", foreclosing any discussion of my own perspectives. This experience was remarkably like that of a Muslim trainee colleague, but, through our general conversations, I noticed how their experience was also shaped by their visible Muslimness which served to evoke their Muslim identity in their training schools in a way my non-religiosity was not. These experiences were the focus of my PGCE dissertation. Through our discussions I became aware of the extent to which their Muslim identity was woven into their growing development as an RE teacher, seemingly more than my own non-religiosity. So, in reference to the pictures above, whilst I concealed my personal beliefs in my RE teaching, my colleague seemed to have been remarkably open, in an apparent reversal of what one might expect given the 'secular' context of British education. Hence, my own experiences of RE Initial Teacher Training (ITT) have caused me to reflect on the identity-attributes of 'Muslim' and 'RE teacher'.

My experiences of teaching RE in an Anglican-Catholic faith school compounded these experiences of concealing my beliefs. When I took up my role, I was strongly advised that I could not share my own non-religious perspectives and had to "pretend" to be Christian. My experience of RE teaching was therefore shaped by this performance of "hiding" my own beliefs in the classroom. Over time this became increasingly difficult and more frustrating, constantly watching what I said or did for signs of self-disclosure. This was further complicated by the pupils' inquiries into my own beliefs - they wanted to know who I was and what I think, and so maintaining a supposed "Christian front" necessitated a tactical economy of truth. My lack of success in this endeavour can be summarised by one pupil's comment at the end of the year: "Sir, you're not really a Christian are you?". This is an enduring memory for me because it was a moment of liberation – I felt I could finally be who I was in the classroom (even just to a single pupil). These experiences encapsulate my motivations for conducting the present research - I wanted to explore this kind of identity work further, particularly because it was not discussed in a meaningful way during my own training.

In many ways I am an 'outsider' to the participants in this study. As a white male who has grown up, has been educated, and currently lives in a predominantly white area of the UK, my body is different to these teachers, most of whom were Muslim women. Gilliat-Ray (2010a, p. 413) reminds us that:

> … visible markers of difference and identity that are inscribed on the body of the
> researcher (especially age, gender and race) can have important implications for the
> data that one is – or is not – able to collect.

I have not been subject to the racism and sexism that are the experience of many Muslims and women in our contemporary context. It could therefore be argued that I am somewhat blind to the processes and manifestations of racism and sexism that the participants in my study experienced, and its subsequent impact on their identity construction. Within the present study, I have tried to mitigate this by explicitly asking questions about 'race', racism, and specifically *Prevent* and FBVs. The participants' responses, or importantly lack of responses, could reflect their own perception of me as a white male 'outsider' and therefore a degree of wariness about discussing such issues. Perhaps, unwittingly, this may be why I have eschewed in-depth discussions of 'race' and racism itself within the present study, reflecting my own analytical bias away from these experiences. Additionally, my pragmatic approach to the research design, incorporated by privileging the needs of the participants above my theoretical and methodological desires, in part reflects this concern. I believe that participants have been remarkably candid in their discussions with me. Reflecting on their feedback and some of the potentially damaging information they shared about their

experiences in their schools and in their local Muslim communities, I leave it to the reader to decide whether they agree with my assessment of their apparent frankness and openness.

Moreover, as someone who is non-religious I am approaching the religious experiences of these participants from a position of a committed non-believer and non-practitioner, for whom the notion of a divine authority does not operate within everyday life. Although the notion of a religious 'insider' or 'outsider' is heavily contested (see McCutcheon, 2005), my worldview sets me apart from the participants who did mostly think in reference to a divine authority. My inability to see or experience their faith "from within" has shaped the present study, placing emphasis on the participants' relationship to their professional role, as opposed to an emphasis on their faith itself. Here I make no claims to objectivity, but I think that my vantage point as a non-religious 'outsider' has provided a critical distance toward certain essentialised notions of being Muslim commonly held and assumed within Muslim communities, as well as within scholarship (see Bender, Cadge, Levitt, & Smilde, 2013). As such, this positioning has seemingly led me, in part, toward a more lived, implicit, and bricologic notion of Muslim identity, which perhaps reflects, to some degree, my own non-religious identity construction.

Conversely, I am also an 'insider' with the participants through our shared experiences of education, studying religion, and teaching RE in schools. As teachers, the participants in this study represent Muslims who have also succeeded in education, mostly in the British education system, and have considerable experience in approaching religion from an academic perspective, much like myself. My support of RE also resonates with these participants through a shared commitment to and love of non-confessional RE as a subject within the contemporary landscape of British education. Thus, it is worth noting that I am broadly supportive of the kind of non-confessional RE currently taught in schools, in contrast to more confessional projects like RE in Austria (see Franken, 2017). Moreover, my teaching experience also resonates with theirs, not only through the experience of identity work, but also in my understanding of the general life-world of the RE teacher. This was perhaps most salient in my understanding of the lexicon of RE and teaching and its pervasive use of acronyms, which created a sense of a language between shared researcher and participant. Consequently, I believe my perspective as an RE teacher has helped enable me to understand their lived experiences. This is partly why I have approached these Muslim actors from the perspective of their professional role, using this as a lens through which to view their faith.

## 1.2 Key Terms

There are a number of contested key terms that I wish to establish my usage of for the proceeding discussion. These terms are engaged with further in the later chapters, but here by establishing these terms I intend to orient the reader.

### 'Muslimness' and 'Race'

Shah's (2009, 2018) use of the term 'Muslimness' is somewhat hazy, referring to, in its broadest sense, individuals' own understanding of their Islamic faith identity (2009, 527), but also to their association with the *Ummah* (2018, pp. 3-4), and to the visible manifestations and practices of being Muslim in society (2018, p. 3).

Here, the study uses the term in its broadest sense, as one's own understanding of one's self as Muslim. As I discuss in the Methodology, this is in keeping with the underlying theoretical and methodological approach of my study. I have avoided defining the notion of Muslimness more specifically at this stage because its manifestations are the focus of discussion in the empirical chapters.

'Race' has been placed in apostrophes throughout to indicate its contested nature. In the present discussion there is considerable overlap between notions of Muslimness and constructions of 'race' based on visible identifying markers.

### 'Confessional' and 'non-confessional' RE

I use the terms 'confessional' and 'non-confessional' in light of the focus on RE within the thesis. 'Confessional' RE refers to RE that aims to inculcate a particular faith within a pupil (Bobinac, 2007, p. 427). In contrast, 'non-confessional' RE aims to 'transfer information about religion/religions', from which to allow them to explore their own views (Bobinac, 2007, p. 427). In England, RE is conceived as a non-confessional enterprise, although this notion has been subject to much academic debate, which is considered in chapters 2 and 3.

### 'Neutrality' and 'impartiality'

In reference to the above terms, debate has focussed on RE teacher's own positions and commitments and their capacity to express them in the classroom. The terms 'neutrality' and 'impartiality' have become key signifiers of RE teacher professionalism in terms of non-confessional RE, despite being ill-defined and arguably an 'impossible aim' (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017, p. 2). Going forward, I use Jackson and Everington's (2017) distinction between 'impartial' and 'neutral' positions because their current exploration is grounded in the pedagogy of RE in the UK. 'Neutrality' refers to 'concealment of any personal commitment on the teacher's part, and any personal views of pupils are set to one side' (2017, p. 10). Whilst 'impartiality' involves 'teaching and learning without

discrimination as to ethnicity, religion, class or political opinions, with freedom of expression allowed within agreed limits' (2017, p. 10). Thus, the distinction between these terms lies in the extent to which an RE teacher can express their beliefs, whether they should completely conceal them (adopting a neutral position) or in some instances express them as one view, amongst others, in the classroom (an impartial position) (2017, p. 10). These terms are subject to much discussion in chapters 3, 5, and 6.

### 'Secular' and 'non-religious'

Whilst it is not within the purview of this thesis to engage with the full complexities of the formulations of the 'secular' and 'non-religious', nor the contestations surrounding secularisation and the supposed decline of religion in public life, establishing broadly what is meant by these terms is necessary. Notions of the 'secular' tend to be linked to the concept of secularisation: that religion is declining in modern society (Bruce, 2017). However, this is heavily contested, with scholars arguing that traditional forms of religion are transforming rather than in decline, and that in non-European contexts religion is on the rise (Davie, 2013). The 'secular' has also become entwined with scientific (or scientist) or philosophical worldviews, grounded purely 'in the world' (Stenmark, 2001). The Commission on Religious Education's (2018, p. 26) use of 'worldviews' to delineate the 'secular' suggests a somewhat similar use, referring to ostensibly 'non-religious' positions such as 'Humanism, Secularism or Atheism'. However, in RE this is also bound up with notions of the non-confessional and neutral as described above. Given the pertinence of the Commission's report to RE, in this thesis the term 'secular' refers to the above commitments, and in the main a commitment to 'non-religion'. The 'secular' is revisited in chapter 2 with specific regard to RE.

The term 'non-religion' is similarly difficult to define. Despite the longstanding debates surrounding the 'secular' and the growth of religious 'nones', there has been remarkably little sociological research exploring this rise (Madge & Hemming, 2017). Broadly speaking, 'non-religion' simply denotes 'non-belief in God', and is typically positioned in contrast to, or in resistance to, traditional forms of religion, and as the 'secular' (Lee, 2015, chapter 2). However, this simple definition belies the complexity of 'non-religious' identifications and manifestations (Madge & Hemming, 2017, pp. 874 - 875). Although the 'non-religious' involves a constellation of characteristics, Madge and Hemming (2017, pp. 885 - 886) highlight the pervasive sense of 'non-belief in God' and the freedom to choose what one believes as key characteristics of 'non-religiosity', not necessarily, but somewhat distinct from, 'institutional' forms of religion. The Commission on RE's (2018, p. 26) report also makes a similar distinction. Thus, I take 'non-religious' to denote 'non-belief in God' going forward, again also referring to the above commitments particularly around individual choice and agency. These themes are revisited in chapters 3, 5, and 7.

## 1.3 Thesis Outline

### Chapter 2: Muslims, Education, and Religious Education

In this chapter I provide the background and context within which the participants are situated. I first establish how notions of Muslimness and 'Muslim first' have come to conceptualise Muslim identity construction within education. I then consider the development of the 'Muslim question' in relation to this, meaning the construction of Muslim identities as a 'complex problem' that has had to be managed by educational policy. This has revealed several tensions between Muslims and British education, one of which is RE. These contests have become reified by the growing significance of *Prevent* and FBVs.

I then provide a brief overview of RE to establish what I mean by 'RE' in the present study. Exploration of RE reveals a messy picture of conflicting aims, pedagogies, and purposes, but underlying this is a core narrative of a non-confessional, phenomenological, and world religions orientated RE. I then outline some of the challenges that this kind of RE presents to Muslims within British education.

### Chapter 3: Muslim Teachers in the Literature

This chapter presents an overview of the current scholarship pertaining specifically to Muslim teachers. Here I trace the major conceptual strands which currently underpin their construction from a 'race' trajectory, a spirituality trajectory, and a teacher professionalism trajectory. By doing so, it is revealed that prior research has predominantly focussed on issues of 'race' and racism, and so this analytical focus on Muslimness prioritises its visible and physical markers. Emerging discourses surrounding the ways Muslim teachers attend to their spirituality in the role, as well as research that specifically considers the relationship between religious identities and RE teaching, problematises and offers new perspectives that challenges this dominant 'race' paradigm.

### Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter I restate the main research questions and outline an appropriate theoretical and methodological framework from which to explore these questions. A discussion of a social constructivist theoretical paradigm, and the conceptual advantages of a lived religion and 'everyday lived Islam' approach to the study of Muslim identities, leads me to adopt a qualitative research methodology and research design. I then explicate the methods and practicalities of the research, using semi-structured interviews and shadows with 21 participants. Finally, I outline the sample, thematic data analysis strategy, management of the data, and ethical considerations.

### Chapters 5-7: Empirical Chapters

Each of these chapters considers the research questions in turn. In Chapter 5, I explore who 'Muslim RE teachers' are and how they understand their faith and professional roles. I draw particular attention to their contestation of the label 'Muslim RE teacher' and, subsequently, why they challenged this label. Chapter 6 considers how the participants engage in identity work in practice, and the extent to which they can incorporate Muslimness into their work as RE teachers. In doing so, this chapter also highlights synergies between their faith and professional role. Finally, in Chapter 7, I attend to potential tensions between the participants' Muslim and RE teacher identity-attributes.

### Chapter 8: Discussion

This chapter places my findings in conversation with existing scholarship surrounding Muslim teachers, RE teaching, and British Muslim identity more widely. I make the case for the shift from 'Muslim RE teacher' to 'RE teacher who is Muslim' to be a statement of a developing Muslim narrative that is shifting from 'just Muslim' to 'Muslim who is'. I pay particular attention to the role of agency within the construction of these identities, and how attending to agency offers a way of nuancing the current scholarly representations of Muslims beyond the 'Muslim first' motif. I then consider how processes of racialisation can be better understood as the denial of this agency. These claims are reinforced by the participants' own practice, acting as bricoleurs to play with the repertoires of Muslimness and the RE teacher. I also draw attention to their eschatological concerns and awareness of the presence of transcendent authority within their school contexts, as a potential conflict between the this-worldly authorities such as educational policies and wider teaching culture.

### Chapter 9: Conclusion

My final chapter restates the main contributions of the thesis. I make a case for the three significant findings previously discussed: the nuancing of the agency of Muslim actors, the capacity for Muslims to act as bricoleurs in the construction of Muslimness, and highlight the potential synergies and tensions between this-worldly and transcendent authority in the workplace. From this, I argue that more qualitative and quantitative work is needed to consider Muslim identities from a lived religion perspective, paying attention to their agency within the analyses of Muslims, and advocate the development of Muslims in the workplace as a potential new sub-field. I also suggest that my research could be conducted with RE teachers of other faiths (e.g. Hindu RE teachers), extending my focussed study on Muslims in particular.

# Chapter 2: Muslims, Education, and Religious Education

My study is framed within the context of fierce academic and public debate around the place of Muslims and religion within British state education. As interlocutors between these, 'Muslim RE teachers' are seemingly at a nexus of tensions. These tensions encapsulate wider discourses surrounding notions of British Muslim identity and the contentious relationship between religion and the British public sphere. These tensions therefore form the background and context within which the participants in this study are situated.

## 2.0 Muslims and the British Education System

Muslims are a significant minority ethnic and religious group in the British educational landscape. Muslims in the UK have a youthful demographic. Out of the 2.7 million Muslims living in England and Wales, approximately half are under 25 and 33% are under the age of 15 (ONS, 2011). Reflecting the youthful demographic of Muslims in Britain, the percentage of young Muslims in the British education system is markedly higher than other minority groups (OSI, 2005). Accordingly, scholarship has tended to approach the Muslim experience of education from the perspective of Muslim pupils.

The literature has also established that young Muslims primarily identify with their religious identity (DeHanas, 2015; Jacobson, 1998). This has led to their conceptualisation as 'Muslim first' in educational contexts (Geaves, 2005; Moulin, 2015; Shah, 2006, 2018). As Shah (2018, pp. 3-4) writes:

> The experiences of Muslim diaspora in the UK and elsewhere have influenced their identity configurations at different levels in different contexts, often promoting an increasing engagement with Muslimness as an identity marker to emphasize association with the Muslim *Ummah.* The concept of *Ummah* is drawn from the Qur'an, where it is used to refer to the wider Muslim community beyond geopolitical boundaries. It provides a global identity for all believers to associate with, and conveys the message that Muslims the world over belong to one *Ummah* or community irrespective of any other differences. The discourse promotes an overarching faith identity that smooths over the differences and brings the community together at the conceptual level of *Ummah*.

This is not to say that Muslim identities are homogeneous.[2] However, whilst maintaining that Muslim identities are heterogeneous, Shah (2006, p. 224) argues that the *Ummah* represents a 'super-ordinate' identity to which Muslims orient, expressing 'the member's commitment to the continuity and perpetuation of the group, working at the level where conflicts and oppositions do not emerge as active barriers'. Research has highlighted the primacy of the Muslim identity in the identity construction of Muslim pupils, drawing on 'religious practices, symbols and rituals' as the source of their Muslimness (Shah, 2016, p. 174). As such, the literature strongly suggests that Muslims interface with British education through the lens of their Muslim identity.

The 'Muslim question' within education has therefore emerged as a fierce site of debate. Questions have been raised surrounding the capacity for schools to support the needs of Muslim pupils, the extent to which 'secular' education can attend to these needs, and conversely, the ways schools construct and manage this group of religious minority actors (Abbas, 2005a; Miah, 2017; Shah, 2016). As Shah (2016, p. 173) states, in educational contexts 'Muslims and Islam are often constructed as a complex problem' which has intensified in light of the youthful demographic of Muslim communities in Britain. Moreover, these debates have seemingly become a proxy for wider tensions between Islam and British society (Shah, 2016, p. 175). Thus, as Panjwani and Moulin-Stożek (2017) propose, the growing significance of Muslims has brought a 'religious turn' to educational debates.

However, these complexities are not new. They were recognised within the *Swann Report* (Swann, 1985) and the *1988 Educational Reform Act* (HM Government) under the broader auspices of anti-racist education (Nielsen, 2004, p. 57). Prior to these reports the accommodation of Muslim pupils primarily involved miscellaneous provisions: relaxing uniform policies to allow for Muslim girls to wear religious dress, providing vegetarian or *halal* school meal options, and cooperation with local Muslim leaders on aspects of RE (Nielsen, 2004, pp. 56-57). Later on, notions of anti-racist and multicultural education brought sweeping changes to how education in Britain was conceived, bringing a requirement within policy to meet the needs of minority pupils to the attention of schools, and, with the advent of the National Curriculum, an attempt to 'facilitate access for all pupils to a wide range of core subjects' (Troyna, 1990). The new right of schools to opt out of Local Educational Authority (LEA) control also opened up the possibilities for state-funded Muslim schools, for which there had been a growing campaign (Cumper, 1990).

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[2] For example, Modood (2005), Lewis (2007), and Gilliat-Ray (2010b) consider the identity of British Muslims recognising different communities rather than a homogeneic 'community', across different schools of thought or ethnicities.

Although this was generally seen as positive, these reports revealed seemingly irrevocable tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim perspectives on education that persist today (Shah, 2016). There was a reaction against these measures by white, non-Muslim communities who feared that the concerns of ethnic minorities were 'taking precedence' over the needs of white students (Nielsen, 2004, p. 57). In 1985 these reactions culminated in the story of Ray Honeyford affair, centring on the views of the Head Teacher at Drummond Middle School in Bradford, where 95% of the pupil body were Asian (and Muslim) (Demaine, 1993). In response to the perceived 'ghettoisation' of his school, he wrote a controversial article condemning the effect of multiculturalism in education. These controversies continue to be paradigmatic in contemporary debates about the place of Muslims in education, particularly in reaction to the 2014 'Trojan Horse' affair (Miah, 2017). 'Trojan Horse' is discussed further later in the chapter (p. 17).

Criticism from Muslim organisations revealed disagreement between Muslims and the essentially 'secular' nature of British schooling. Whilst well intended, Muslim organisations claimed that the report misrepresented their needs as a matter of 'race' rather than in terms of 'religious principles and priorities' (Nielsen, 2004, p. 58). Muslim leaders also criticised the purpose of British education. They felt that its 'secular' principles were orientated toward creating autonomous and critical individuals rather than nurturing orientation toward the divine, thereby excluding the authority of God (Nielsen, 2004, p. 58). Thus, there seemed to be an irrevocable disagreement between the aims and purposes of education surrounding Muslim pupils, emulating a wider 'clash of civilisations' rhetoric (Huntington, 1996).

RE was a focal point of this disagreement. Despite the shift from Religious Instruction (RI) - a confessional Christian enterprise - to RE and its explicitly non-confessional, multi-faith approach, Muslim organisations remained critical of its 'secular', non-confessional nature. Issues raised with the 'secular' foundation of RE was that it did not nurture the faith of Muslim pupils and that it professed the equal validity of all faiths (Nielsen, 2004, pp. 58 - 59). The desire to nurture faith was, and still is, seen as 'educationally unacceptable' within the multi-faith RE model as an essentially non-confessional enterprise, and by RE teachers and scholars themselves (Nielsen, 2004, p. 59). Equally, given RE's proximity to the above reports, the prioritisation of some religions over others was simply unacceptable and against its pedagogical commitments to the phenomenological study of religion.

These tensions continue to shape the experience of Muslims in education today and has led to a scholarly consensus that the experience of Muslims within British education is overwhelmingly hostile. Although this picture is changing (Khattab & Modood, 2018), studies have consistently

presented the underachievement of Muslims within the British education system as symptomatic of the continuing failures of this system to accommodate Muslim learners (Abbas, 2005b; MCB, 2007). A key cause identified by scholars are processes of systemic racism enshrined in educational policies and practice, with BME learners experiencing racism, discrimination, and disadvantage throughout their schooling (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000). Overt and covert racism and Islamophobia are also pervasive in the everyday experience of Muslim pupils and teachers, denying their desire to embody Muslimness within their school's social contexts (Haque & Elliot, 2017; Shah, 2018). Since *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (McPherson, 1999), questions have also been raised about the degree to which schools are challenging these racist processes.

These challenges are exacerbated by, and exacerbate, wider social and political dynamics. The poor socio-economic status of many Muslim households means that Muslim pupils also face this well-documented disadvantage in education (Gilliat-Ray, 2010b). Their poor educational performance perpetuates their low socio-economic position as they are unable to attain better paid jobs. This can mean that the poverty disadvantage becomes entrenched in the experience of Muslim pupils. Furthermore, there has been a worrying rise of anti-Muslim sentiment within schools, with incidents of Islamophobic micro-aggressions and bullying mirroring wider socio-political discourses in the British public sphere (Home Office, 2017). Thus, Muslim pupils face a double-bind of poverty and racism, which are the prevailing strands of educational inequality (Strand, 2014).

Accommodating and managing Muslimness also continues to be a challenge faced by the institutional structures of education. As Shah (2018, p. 12) starkly puts:

> Unfortunately the school leaders/ teachers are generally not equipped to deal with such complex situations and issues, which are increasing apprehensions among all concerned. In this context, the need to understand and address the challenges of Muslimness in educational settings becomes highly significant and must be embedded in educational research.

In 2007 the Muslim Council of Britain drew attention to the ongoing insufficient and limited response of schools to accommodate the miscellaneous provisions previously identified, limiting the capacity of Muslims to attend to their religious needs during their learning. The continuing underrepresentation of Muslim teachers and school leaders has also meant that Muslim pupils often lack role models or people they can turn to, in order to bring these needs to the attention of their schools (Basit, 2017, Introduction; NASUWT, 2017). 'Secular', Eurocentric conceptualisations of education and leadership have been critiqued as especially in conflict with the Islamic and cultural values that Muslim pupils bring to education (Shah, 2006, 2016). The response by school leaders has

been a general reluctance to engage with Islamic values and notions of education to accommodate these identities, raising further tensions in the incorporation of Muslimness from an institutional perspective (Shah, 2018). School curricular, again specifically RE, have also been criticised as 'inadequate' not for taking the beliefs of young Muslims seriously, and failing to support them in understanding their faith within their multi-faith contexts (Wilkinson, 2015).

As such, British schools have been understood as hostile and challenging environments for Muslim learners by preventing the embodiment of their Muslimness, and so denying the primary way in which they construct their identities. The perceived conflict between Islamic values and the West, enshrined within the socialisation aims of British education, has translated into the construction of Muslims as '*problems* that need to be addressed' (Miah, 2016, p. 9, italics in Miah). For Muslim pupils, this has created a sense that they 'do not belong' in their schools, or within wider British society (Shah, 2009, p. 528). In contrast, there has been a demonstrable improvement in academic performance by Muslim pupils in even poorly resourced Muslim schools where these values form part of the educational environment, further highlighting the significance of Muslimness in the educational context of Muslim learners (Tinker, 2009). Historically, and increasingly within a post 9/11 and 7/7 context, tensions are being reified to construct Muslims as the 'other' within the education system, coinciding with wider social and political discourses. As Shah (2016, p. 175) writes, Muslim identities in education are 'shaped by experiences and perceptions of marginalisation, in opposition to the dominant society'.

### 2.0.1: Securitisation and the Trojan Horse Affair

In the wake of the Trojan Horse affair in 2014 these racialised politics have intensified, ushering in a new context of the securitisation for Muslim identities within the education sphere. 'Trojan Horse' makes reference to the supposed Islamist plot to "take over" a series of Muslim majority state schools in Birmingham, with an aim to surreptitiously foster a deeply conservative and traditional, or extreme, brand of Islam and radicalise Muslim pupils. It was triggered by a document anonymously leaked to *The Times* newspaper. Seen as a threat of entryism by extremist groups, the response from government was a series of investigations under the auspices of both education and counter-terrorism legislation. Despite there being no evidence of a plot, the *Clarke Report* (Clarke, 2014, p. 95) maintained that there was still an ideological threat.

After 2014, Trojan Horse has come to dominate public, political, and educational debate. The subsequent discourse has intimately linked Islam and Muslims with notions of threat, framing these prior 'othering' discourses as a matter of national security (Miah, 2016, 2017). Thus, signs of Muslimness have been constructed in the post-Trojan Horse educational context as signs of potential extremism or radicalisation. As Miah (2017, p. 5) writes:

> Not only does it [Counter-Terrorism Security Act] aim to define the Muslim problem
> around liberal ideas of value and culture. It also aims to oversee, regulate and govern
> the Muslim problem around ideas of security and securitisation.

As such, the Muslim body is now increasingly securitised within schools. Muslim identities, signs of Muslimness, and Islamic cultures and values, can be constructed as potential terror threats that warrant surveillance (Coppock & McGovern, 2014; Sian, 2015). These processes of securitisation are now enshrined within educational policy in *Prevent* and FBVs, to which I now turn.

Post-Trojan Horse, *Prevent* has been seen as the primary policy vehicle for these processes of securitisation of the Muslim body. The revelation of Trojan Horse sparked furious political and educational debate surrounding the security of British schools and their capacity to challenge extremism and radicalisation, leading to the entrenchment of the *Prevent* strategy within educational policy. *Prevent* had already been long-established, being implemented in 2003 as the government's flagship counter-terrorism strategy in response to the events of 9/11. In 2011, the definition of extremism was expanded from violent to non-violent extremism in a move to allow the state to tackle problematic ideologies, and so incorporating beliefs and values into its remit. However, with Trojan Horse, alongside other pressures, the government expanded *Prevent* further through the *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act* in 2015, making it a statutory duty for all public sector workers to uphold. In terms of education, the Act now requires teachers to 'understand *Prevent*, be able to recognise vulnerability to radicalisation, and know where to go to seek further help' (Government, 2015, Chapter 5: Section 1). In doing so, it has shaped notions of teacher professionalism toward their capacity to act as counter-terrorism agents (Revell & Bryan, 2018, Chapter 3). Similarly, Ofsted now look for the implementation of *Prevent* as part of its inspection procedures, checking school compliance. As such, the success of schools, seen in the all-important grade that Ofsted gives from inspection, is now in part linked to their capacity to demonstrate their engagement with *Prevent*.

*Prevent* has been the focus of significant academic critique since its inception, and these critiques have led to the recent resurgence in literature surrounding Muslims in education (Panjwani, Revell, Gholami, & Diboll, 2017). *Prevent* and the *Counter-Terrorism Security Act* were initially contested as a poorly defined knee-jerk response to Trojan Horse, based on an outdated 'conveyor belt' model of radicalisation (Miah, 2017). The power to enforce *Prevent* through Ofsted meant that schools scrambled to meet its poorly defined construction of extremism, leading to similarly knee-jerk responses in lieu of adequate *Prevent* training. These kind of responses, alongside the construction of Muslims as a potential threat, has led to the perception that Muslim pupils are being especially

targeted by *Prevent* (Saeed, 2017). As a consequence, this has created a sense of 'perpetual anxiety' for Muslims in relation to their Muslim identity in schools, aware that their Muslimness could see them referred for deradicalisation (Lockley-Scott, 2017). Others have argued that it serves to intensify feelings of division from the State itself, and so incidentally aids the supposed terrorists that *Prevent* is positioned against (Busher, Choudhury, Thomas, & Harris, 2017). Thus, scholars have contended that *Prevent* has reinforced the racist marginalisation of and discrimination against Muslims within schools, denying their construction as Muslim by securitising signs of Muslimness (Coppock, 2014; Miah, 2017; Sian, 2015).

Trojan Horse also saw the restatement of FBVs within schools' Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural development (SMSC). The *2002 Education Act* (Government, 2002) introduced the requirement of all maintained schools to provide SMSC throughout a 'broad and balanced curriculum' to develop pupils spiritually, morally, socially, and culturally. In 2011, the *Prevent* duty also changed SMSC to incorporate 'respect' for four FBVs: 'democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith'. Post-Trojan Horse this commitment was restated, now requiring schools to not only 'respect' but 'actively promote' FBVs within their curriculum (Department for Education 2014). 'Active promotion' means:

> challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values. Attempts to promote systems that undermine fundamental British values would be completely at odds with schools' duty to provide SMSC. The Teachers' Standards expect teachers to uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school. This includes not undermining fundamental British values (Department for Education 2014, p. 5).

Like *Prevent*, the duty to promote FBVs has shaped the educational landscape as part of schools' and teachers' policy frameworks and notions of professionalism. In terms of accountability to Ofsted, FBVs are part of their inspection procedures (Department for Education 2014, p. 6). Specifically, the inclusion of the duty to uphold FBVS within the revised *Teachers Standards* (Department for Education 2012) is important to state, given the current context of the study. Teachers are required to uphold FBVs as part of their role, shaping the notion of teacher professionalism itself toward the embodiment of these values (Bryan, 2012).

Because of the normativity of the values-discourse that underpins FBVs, scholars have argued that it represents a more 'insidious imposition of a political securitisation agenda, onto an unsuspecting profession and pupil population' (Lander, 2016, p. 274). The construction of 'Britishness' that it orients around has cemented existing racist divisions between 'whiteness' and 'blackness' in

education (Revell & Bryan, 2018). As such, and given its proximity to Trojan Horse, it has reified the pre-existing exclusion of Islamic and cultural values in education by its construction as the epistemologically opposed 'other' (see Said, 1979). Miah (2017, p. 5) summarises this conflict:

> The values discourse around fundamental British values is structured in opposition to Muslims; the values discourse constructs Muslims as racial outsiders. In fact, the meta-discourse of Prevent sees British values as being British, because it's not Islamic.

Therefore, it is not only Muslim bodies but Muslim beliefs and values that are now securitised within educational contexts, which need to be 'assimilated by liberal societies into its structures' (Lander, 2016, p. 276). Moreover, the government's definition that criticism of FBVs is itself a sign of radicalisation or extremism means that there is seemingly little recourse for Muslims to affect change within their educational contexts (Lander, 2016).

Consequently, as 'Muslim RE teachers' it is therefore worth investigating the capacity in which these participants can incorporate their Muslimness within these hostile institutional and policy contexts, and conversely, the extent to which they are prohibited from expressing their Muslim identity or 'othered' as a result.

## 2.1 Religious Education

RE is also a significant intersection between the state and matters of religion within education. As Gearon (2014, p. 130) states, RE is 'a critical point of dialogue, the classroom mirroring in microcosm the macrocosmic context of society'. Discourses surrounding RE therefore illuminate wider political interest surrounding religion in education. Moreover, as has been alluded to throughout, RE has been a significant tension between the educational values of Muslims and Islam and that of 'secular' British schooling.

RE brings attention to wider contestations regarding religion in English schools. Despite being understood as broadly 'secular' in terms of its aims and pedagogies, religion is still embedded within the framework of schooling at various levels, particularly Christianity. There is still a significant number of schools with a religious character, be they faith schools or schools with a religious ethos (Department for Education, 2017). A daily act of collective worship remains a requirement in school policy, which must be of a 'broadly Christian character' (Department for Education, 1994). Schools are also required to nurture the spiritual as part of pupil's SMSC development (HM Government, 2002). The notion of RE as a compulsory subject also questions the 'secularity' of the curriculum, revealing an underlying importance given to matters of faith. As such, schools can be variously

'secular' depending on the religious influence within that context. Recognising this complexity, throughout the thesis I have placed 'secular' in apostrophes to remind the reader that the participants were working in broadly 'secular' schools and engaging in 'secular' RE, but that the actual 'secularity' of their school contexts did vary.

Considering RE's aims reveals much of what the subject attempts to achieve in terms of pupils' learning within the school curriculum. Revell (2012, p. 3) critically summarises the trajectory of RE in the following:

> The simplest history of RE is based on a narrative that starts with confessional religious instruction and ends with a model of RE that is objective, liberal and committed to a world religions approach. In this story the trajectory is a liberal journey from an overtly confessional approach to Christianity to one where the six world religions are taught without bias and pupils are encouraged to empathise with all religions equally.

So, in contrast to confessional or traditional forms of religious education that aim to inculcate that faith in children,[3] the aim for RE in British state education is for pupils to learn 'about' and learn 'from' the main religious traditions in the UK in a strictly non-confessional manner. As put by the Religious Education Council's review of RE (2013, pp. 14 - 15), learning 'about' and learning 'from' can be understood as:

A. To know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews.
B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews on their own beliefs.
C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously and critically with religions and worldviews.

This is the kind of RE that the present thesis is concerned with, and the kinds of pedagogical commitments and skills that teachers and pupils engaged in RE must demonstrate.

However, Revell (2012, p. 6) urges caution when using such a simple narrative because this picture belies RE's convoluted legislative and pedagogical history and its problematic relationship with issues of racial and religious difference. It is a muddle of conflicting purposes (Teece, 2010), legislative frameworks (Woodhead, 2018), interest groups (Freathy, Parker, Schweitzer, & Simojoki, 2016a), and pedagogies (Freathy, Doney, Freathy, Walshe, & Teece, 2017), that in many ways reflect

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[3] In terms of confessional Islamic education, examples include supplementary Islamic education, *hifz* classes, or the traditional curricula such as the *dars-i-nizami* taught in Deobandi dar ul-ulooms, which are concerned with the transmission of tradition (Geaves, 2012; Gilliat-Ray, 2006; Sahin, 2013).

these wider challenges and discomfort surrounding religion within the British public sphere. Disentangling these threads is not possible within a brief introductory section. Instead, what I aim to provide here is a simple statement of RE as it is typically understood, to orient the reader around what RE is and therefore elucidate aspects of the participants' daily work. To do so, I believe it best to highlight some key features of this subject: its central aims, content, pedagogical commitments, and legislative framework, with an emphasis toward its representation of Islam and Muslims. By providing a simplistic account of the messy professional context in which the participants in this study are situated as RE teachers, this sets the context for the proceeding discussion.

### 2.1.1 Key Pedagogical Aims, Commitments, and Contestations
*Legislative Framework*

It is worth briefly stating how RE is currently conceived in policy to establish its unique legislative positioning. At the time of writing this thesis RE itself is in a state of flux, on the cusp of increasing calls for a 'new settlement of religion in schools' by Woodhead and Clarke (2015, 2018) and an attempt to formalise a national entitlement for RE in response to the Commission on Religious Education (2018). This is in response to a consistent marginalisation of the subject and failure to deliver good RE in schools, with numerous reports, like those mentioned previously, highlighting its lack of provision and poor-quality teaching (see also APPG, 2013). Whilst it is not within the purview of the present discussion to consider these new initiatives, what it reveals is the general dismay at the state of RE within the British education system, which largely reflects a series of amendments to its original remit set out in the *1944 Education Act* and shift to multi-faith RE in the *1988 Education Act* (see Woodhead, 2018).

RE is now the only compulsory non-English Baccalaureate subject. RE has enjoyed its privileged compulsory position since the *1944 Education Act* and it is still required that all maintained schools teach RE as part of its 'broad and balanced curriculum' (Department for Education 2013, p. 2.4). Every secondary state school pupil from Year 7 to Year 13 has a legal entitlement to partake in RE as part of their education for at least one hour per week, or equivalent. Given the relatively large Muslim pupil demographic mentioned above RE is therefore a significant part of their education in terms of their faith.[4]

Its compulsory requirement continues despite its absence from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) reforms which compromised its position as a core subject (see APPG, 2013, p. 19). This has had considerable managerial implications, as its marginalisation by school leaders in an already crowded timetable has caused RE educators to justify and fight for their work in school, and further

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[4] Although this aspect of the faith development is rarely considered in the wider literature, which focusses on more traditional sites of Islamic education (Berglund, 2017).

compromised its teaching at the chalk face. Its proximity to SMSC, PSHCE, *Prevent*, and FBVs has also led to the co-option of RE for these other political and educational initiatives, in part to justify its place, further diluting its religious focus (Gearon, 2013). Woodhead (2018, p. 8) bluntly writes that RE continues 'largely in spite of the legislative frameworks and resourcing it received from central government', attesting to its current predicament. These practical and managerial implications have therefore detrimentally affected the teaching and learning of both pupils and teachers within RE, straining the capacity for depth and nuance in classroom discussion.

These policy frameworks and practical managerial pressures shape RE's pedagogy and the professional role of the RE teacher within which the participants in this study are situated (Freathy, Parker, Schweitzer, & Simojoki, 2016b). On the one hand, the sheer confusion surrounding RE's position, exacerbated by the recent interference from SMSC, PSHCE, and Prevent and FBVs, have all served to expand and complicate the already pressured remit of RE teachers within their school contexts (Everington, 2016). On the other, lacking much in the way of specific professional or curricula frameworks has also allowed RE teachers considerable scope in crafting their own RE teacher identities (Freathy et al., 2017). These dynamics are explored further in the proceeding Literature Review.

### *Content and Pedagogy*

RE is unique in that there is no National Curriculum. Instead, its curriculum is determined by a school's Locally Agreed Syllabus shaped by their local SACRE. There are a few requirements that this syllabus has to meet: it has to be 'broad and balanced', cover the six principle world religions,[5] but also 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account… the other principal religions represented in Great Britain' (SCAA, 1994).

Pedagogically, RE approaches the study of religion from a phenomenological world religions approach. From the increasing recognition that the confessional pedagogy of RI was increasingly unfit for the needs of pupils to explore their own identities, the 1960's saw the development of what would be RE's core pedagogical commitments in Ninian Smart's phenomenological world religions approach (Hannam, 2016, Chapter 2). This approach brought a focus to the study of the 'facts' of religion - its key descriptive features about the six largest world religions, as well as an 'experiential' dimension for the pupils to explore their own beliefs (Teece, 2010). Grimmit's (1973) foundational work enshrined the phenomenological world religions approach at the heart of RE pedagogy in the aforementioned distinction between learning 'about' and learning 'from' religion.

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[5] Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism.

The two factors of privileging of Christianity and the phenomenological world religions approach have been heavily criticised because of their underlying assumptions and resultant representation of religion within the curriculum. The phenomenological approach has been critiqued for portraying decontextualized accounts of religion that bear little resemblance to religion in real life, encouraging stereotyped and homogenous portrayals of religious believers (CORAB, 2015, Chapter 4; Hayward, 2006; Jackson, 2004). The privileging of Christianity (especially Protestant Christianity) exacerbates this, setting it as the conceptual framework for religion in which other faiths must fit (Barnes, 2000). This has led to claims of a surreptitious continuation of Christian confessionalism in RE, which is not only unwarranted and misrepresentative of the wider UK population that is becoming increasingly 'secular' (Woodhead & Clarke, 2015), but also the assumption that Christianity is the 'default' religion (Hayward, 2006).

Islam has been particularly vulnerable to these misrepresentations within RE as the historic 'other' to Christianity. As Revell (2012, p. 19) puts, Islam is positioned 'against Christianity as a lower form of monotheism', and pupils 'would compare sacred books, rituals and places of worship without ever having to consider the social context'. This is compounded by homogenous portrayals that make little reference to the various traditions within Islam and the internal diversity of beliefs and values (Geaves, 1998; Jackson et al., 2010, p. 6), although the recent inclusion of Shia Islamic perspectives in curricula has been a step toward improving this. Decontextualised accounts also propagate what Berglund (2014, p. 1) has termed the 'robotic tendency' in representing Muslims, meaning the 'habit of reducing practitioners to robot-like beings that uniformly perform identical actions' typically grounded in scripture. As such, critics have argued that RE has further entrenched wider discriminatory discourses in schools by propagating an image of Islam and Muslims that is 'other' to the supposed Western Christian liberal norm (Berglund, 2014; Revell, 2012).

### Non-Confessionalism
In the UK RE is envisaged as strictly non-confessional. This has meant that RE does not intend to inculcate faith commitment but to present an 'accurate' account of religious concepts within which pupils themselves can explore their own beliefs and values (Grimmitt, 1987, p. 253). This non-confessionalism is enshrined in the phenomenological approach, in which religion should be presented in a way which is 'uncoloured by conscious apologetic or polemical assumptions' (Barnes, 2001, pp. 448 - 449). As such, much of RE's notions of professionalism have been concerned with issues of neutrality and objectivity, bias and fairness, indoctrination, and accuracy in the presentation of religious phenomena in the classroom (Jackson & Everington, 2017). Moreover, engaging in RE requires individuals to 'bracket off' their own faith commitments to explore religion

objectively (Barnes, 2000, p. 325). This means that religions are approached as being equally valid regardless of the competing truth-claims that underpin them (Barnes, 2006).

Critics have argued that the commitment to non-confessionalism marginalises the experiences of religious individuals. For Copley (2005, p. 148), this commitment has excluded the real possibility of God in the presentations of religions, like a 'fish that has been filleted'. Thompson (2004, p. 66) claims that non-confessional RE actually entails a 'disguised' commitment to 'secular' humanism, because it requires teachers to present no view or commitment toward religion. Moulin (2015, pp. 498-499) also posits that the 'religious identity masking' that some religious pupils adopt in RE is evidence of this marginalisation, enacted in response to the perceived irrationality of religion within the classroom. Thus, there has been concern surrounding the ontological and epistemological acceptability of religious identities in the RE classroom due to the perceived requirement to bracket off their faith (Bryan & Revell, 2011).

As I have alluded to, this non-confessional-as-secular foundation has long been a site of contestation from Muslim perspectives. The bracketing off of faith is something that Muslim pupils have disproportionately struggled with (Ipgrave, 1999), and actively goes against their religious upbringing (MCB, 2007). The implications of adopting a non-confessional stance - requiring acceptance that all religions are equally valid and that Islam might not be true - has been seen as a risk to the faith commitment of Muslim pupils (see Zaki 1982, p.35 in Ipgrave, 1999, p. 147). Moreover, as Revell (2012, p. 92) states, this approach is blind to the patent racial and religious differences of the Muslim pupil experience in the current securitised context. As such, the commitment to non-confessionalism has been seen to compromise the degree to which Muslims can incorporate their Muslimness within RE (Ipgrave, 1999, p. 155; Revell, 2012).

*Criticality*

RE also aims to enable pupils to be evaluative and critical of religion, including their own, by learning 'from' religions. Critical and evaluative skills robustly prepare pupils for life in contemporary society by developing their understanding of their own worldview as one position amongst many, and encourages them to develop reasoning for accepting some beliefs over others (Religious Education Council, 2013, p. 15). As such, criticality has been seen as a vital part of a pupil's spiritual and social development in school (Religious Education Council, 2013, p. 15). In RE, then, religious beliefs are subject to a degree of scrutiny in order to develop these vital critical and hermeneutical skills.

The commitment to criticality has been seen to compound the above challenges regarding the faith identity of Muslim pupils. This commitment has been understood as a requirement to not only be

objective but also to criticise Islam. For some Muslims this is theologically untenable, as encapsulated by Ashraf's (1988, p.77 in Ipgrave, 1999, p. 148) response:

> Critical openness which demands an 'evaluation' even of values and assumptions of a religion is repugnant to Islam and the Muslims in so far as Religious Education classes are concerned.

Ipgrave's (1999) work is unique in highlighting the pedagogical challenges that criticality elicits in the classroom between the 'religious values' of Muslims and the 'educational values' of RE teachers. She (1999, p. 148) writes how Muslim learners struggle with this critical, evaluative capacity because of a perceived antagonism toward their faith. Ipgrave (1999, pp. 150, 155), and later Everington (2014), also find evidence, from the perspective of teachers, of a dismissiveness and arrogant attitude from Muslim pupils, who are seemingly unwilling to engage with anything other than Islam. For Revell (2012, p. 116), criticality has incidentally been a way to uphold the dominant representations of Islam and Muslims in schools by facilitating criticism of their perceived illiberal values. So, whilst a 'weak form of critical openness' is potentially of value to Muslim learners by allowing them to appraise their beliefs from within the tradition, criticality itself elicits various spiritual and theological tensions between Muslims and RE that become expressed in the classroom (Ipgrave, 1999, pp. 150-151).

### SMSC, PSHCE, and Social Cohesion

Given its subject matter and core commitments, RE has also been positioned in close proximity to schools' SMSC and PSHCE curricula and as a force for social cohesion (Moulin, 2012; Religious Education Council, 2013). In an increasingly demanding school timetable, RE's tenuous position from the perspective of school leaders has meant that it has also become co-opted for the delivery of SMSC and PSHCE (Woodhead, 2018). This has meant that RE curricula, including its official GCSE courses, also cover broader social, moral, and cultural topics alongside religious perspectives. Such diverse topics include attitudes to sex and relationships, homosexuality, drugs and alcohol, and racism, amongst others. Thus, much of RE is spent discussing 'controversial issues' in the classroom, confronting pupils and teachers with the demands of engaging in these challenging areas of debate (Miller, 2013; Religious Education Council, 2010b).

RE in a post 9/11 context has also sought justification on the grounds that it can promote social cohesion and prevent terrorism as part of its remit (Moulin, 2012). Arguably, this has reshaped RE away from phenomenology to a 'liberalising' approach to religion, seeking to emphasise the commonalities and benefits of diverse religions in the UK to combat terrorism and extremism, as well as Islamophobia and intolerance (Moulin, 2012, pp. 161-162, 169). As such, RE has also been

identified as the subject *par excellence* for the *Prevent* duty and FBVs in schools, given its capacity to engage with the beliefs and values of pupils (Gearon, 2013).

These impositions have complicated the aims of RE, undermining not only its subject aims and content but also its capacity to present religion from a 'neutral' phenomenological perspective (Teece, 2010). Moulin (2012, p. 170) writes how the intellectual autonomy and integrity of RE has been compromised by the insistence of portraying liberal accounts of religion purely intended to counteract stereotypes and prejudice. Its proximity to *Prevent* and FBVs has been especially problematic, constructing the 'counter-terrorist RE classroom' where RE's pedagogical aims have been manipulated to potentially identify and intervene with students' problematic beliefs (Gearon, 2013, p. 143). For Lander (2016, p. 274), the inclusion of this duty is a 'blatant reinforcement of teachers as instruments of the state within a liberal democracy'. The requirement for teachers to uphold FBVs as part of their professional mandate has also brought considerable scholarly critique in the case of RE teachers, fundamentally compromising their ability to be neutral by having to privilege beliefs that are consonant with FBVs (Bryan, 2012). Understandably, this has led to the RE classroom being an especially precarious space for Muslims where their beliefs are not only elicited but subject to scrutiny (Revell, 2012, Chapter 4).

## 2.2 Concluding Remarks

It is for these reasons that my work on 'Muslim RE teachers' is especially important. These teachers are tasked with constructing an identity that encompasses these wider tensions between Muslims and British education. Exploring their capacity and strategies to incorporate their Muslimness not only within racist institutional structures, but also in a subject and professional role conceived as openly hostile to notions of Muslim identity on explicitly religious grounds, is pertinent to the experience of Muslims in the British sphere more widely. Specifically, their positioning can reveal not only the challenges but also avenues of success within this context, as successful professionals engaging in complex identity work. Hence, against this current educational backdrop, exploring the relationship between 'Muslim RE teachers'' faith and professional role sheds new light on these entrenched contestations.

# Chapter 3: Muslim Teachers in the Literature

Chapter 2 provided an account of the current context of Muslims in British education and RE. It has been argued that this context is overwhelmingly hostile to Muslims, with the *Prevent* assemblage pervading their educational experience and further entrenching longstanding institutional processes of exclusion. As such, young British Muslims have long experienced isolation and inequality within the British education system.

Yet Muslim teachers have been surprisingly absent from academic research. The majority of the literature has focused on its consumers: pupils and parents. As potential interlocutors between Muslims and the state apparatus of education, this represents a significant gap in the discussion. Muslim teachers represent Muslim actors who have achieved success within education, not only attaining the qualifications and training to attain such a position, but also choosing to return to education as their desired occupation. In this way, teachers' voices can offer a powerful counter-critique to the 'uncritical celebration' of consumer voices, those of Muslim pupils and parents, in educational discourses (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009, p. 666). The present study attends to this gap by providing a new perspective on this current scholarly discourse through an exploration of the experiences of 'Muslim RE teachers' working in English secondary schools.

Due to the paucity of literature pertaining to Muslim teachers, specifically in the UK, their conceptualisation is sporadic. Whilst I am aware of scholarship surrounding Muslim teachers in European contexts (Heimbrock, 2007; Kallioniemi, 2018; Rissanen, 2012), the US (Brooks, 2014; Memon, 2011), and elsewhere (Clément, 2015), these have been eschewed here for a focus on Muslim teachers in England, given the uniqueness of non-confessional state RE, and religion generally, in the English context. Each of these national contexts brings its own configurations of religion and RE in schools, and sometimes veering into the territory of Islamic education, which would further complicate the already complex discussion of religion and RE within this thesis. Also, one of the central claims of the thesis relates to notions of British Muslim identity, and how workplaces can be eliciting new forms of Muslimness (see chapter 8).

Accordingly, in this Literature Review I consider how Muslim teachers have been conceptualised so far by charting the key themes that have emerged within scholarship. The rationale for this conceptual mapping is to locate Muslim teachers within existing paradigms in which to ground my later theorising and methodology. There are three broader, overlapping fields in which Muslim teachers are found to be present: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) teacher research, Islamic education, and RE teacher research. By considering Muslim teachers across these three fields, a

conceptual picture emerges of their construction along the trajectories of 'race', spirituality, and teacher professionalism. Significant attention is paid to the trajectory of 'race', representing the dominant discourse surrounding Muslim teachers, and here this is put into conversation with these other fields.

By mapping these conceptual trajectories, I argue that the current conceptualisation of Muslim teachers is problematic, failing to consider them as an 'embodied whole' in the way that Mellor and Shilling (2014, p. 3) have shown we must. This critique draws on Panjwani's (2017) wider critique of the 'religification' and 'racialisation' of Muslims in education, and subsequent suggestion that Muslim teachers should be understood primarily as social actors. On the basis of this critique, I suggest that 'Muslim RE teachers' should be primarily considered as social actors from which to consider how their religious and professional desires entwine and shape their experiences in their workplace contexts. This is then taken through to the theoretical and methodological discussion.

## 3.0 'Race', Racialisation, Racism and the Teacher

By far the most developed discourse surrounding Muslim teachers sits within the field of BME teacher research. This field focusses on the impact of 'race', racialisation, and racism on the experiences of BME actors within education. As has been discussed, in a post-9/11 context the increased focus on Muslim identities has marked a 'religious turn' within sociological and educational debates, foregrounding a distinct group of minority actors (Panjwani & Moulin-Stożek, 2017, p. 519). Consequently, the conceptualisation of Muslim teachers has become bound up within a 'racialised' theoretical and methodological tradition (Shah & Shaikh, 2010). I therefore begin with an exploration of how Muslim teachers have been conceptualised within BME teacher research along the trajectory of the 'race' discourse, and the limitations of this approach for the purpose of the present study.

### 3.0.1 Constructing the BME Teacher

The study of BME teachers, as a well-established discourse in the wider field of teacher research, understandably serves as the theoretical and methodological foundation for research concerning Muslim teachers. The movement to study the working lives, careers, and aspirations of BME teachers emerged in the late 1980s, in response to *The Swann Report* (1985) and the *1988 Educational Reform Act*, which aimed to meet the educational needs of a growing BME population. A unique turn was to include a small number of qualitative interviews to help unpack the largely quantitative analysis that underpinned these studies. This 'qualitative turn' led to illumination of the impact of racism within the day-to-day realities of BME teachers (Pole, 1999, pp. 313 - 314).

Osler's (1997) *The Education and Careers of Black Teachers* is paradigmatic in this BME approach. Building upon this qualitative turn, Osler (1997, p. 39) looked beyond the purely structural context to these everyday realities, adopting a sophisticated 'life histories' approach to understand 'the complex ways in which racism and interpersonal behaviour are related'. This uncovered a series of key characteristics which marked out experiences of BME teachers: [6]

- **Role models**: BME teachers espoused a strong commitment to acting as role models for BME (and other disadvantaged) pupils, grounded in equality and justice. Sometimes black teachers had to confront colleagues' attitudes, as well as those of BME pupils, towards education. They were keen to challenge stereotypes about lack of achievement and the 'whiteness' of the curriculum.

- **Racism**: Black teachers felt isolated not only from white teacher colleagues but from black pupils who perceived these teachers as acting 'white'. Teachers also reported feelings of vulnerability when dealing with issues of equality.

- **Career attainment**: Black teachers reported that progress on the leadership scale was more challenging for them than for their white colleagues. This is exacerbated by an underrepresentation of Black teachers in Senior Leadership Team (SLT) positions.

- **Support**: Networking, senior leadership understanding and support, and mentoring were all seen as vital strategies for professional support. Yet, the networking of BME teachers was perceived as negative from white colleagues.

- **Survival strategies**: A typology of survival strategies were employed by BME teachers in order to "survive" their teaching contexts: from retreat, assimilation, integration, to challenge, resistance, and refusal to accommodate. They also tended to exhibit the following successful traits: a positive mental attitude, determination, high professional standards, a clear moral purpose linked to social justice/equality, and teaching as a vocation.

The success of Osler's (1997) work continues to structure the framework of many BME teacher studies in both focus and methodology (McNamara et al., 2009, p. 12). Over the past 20 years, quantitative (Bush, Glover, & Sood, 2006; Cunningham & Hargreaves, 2007; Haque & Elliot, 2017; McKenley & Gordon, 2002; McNamara et al., 2009; NASUWT, 2017) and qualitative studies (Basit et al., 2007; Bhopal, 2015; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Lander, 2014) continue to underscore the pervasiveness of the characteristics of the BME teacher experience. 2017's NASUWT (p. 6) report *Visible Minorities, Invisible Teachers* puts this starkly:

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[6] Taken both from my reading of Osler's (1997) work and the summary offered by McNamara, Howson, Gunter, and Fryers (2009, p. 12).

That the issue of racism in our schools remains of considerable concern 30 years after

the seminal report on racial inequality in schools, Education for All, was published by

Lord Swann is deeply worrying.

In a post 9/11 context **racialisation** has also become a prominent focus within the field, which is left
somewhat implicit in Osler's (1997) work. Bhopal (2015, p. 204) draws attention to the embodiment
of 'race' as a site of conflict with teacher professionalism. She writes that:

For many respondents, their 'presentation of self' (Goffman, 1959) manifested itself

in their clothes and dress, but also in their professionalism towards pupils and their

colleagues. The 'presentation of self' had a significant impact on how they were

judged and the extent to which they were able to ensure their acceptance within the

school space.

As 'whiteness' is constructed as being professional, 'blackness' becomes seen as unprofessional, the
'white' notion of teacher professionalism serves to exclude 'blackness' from its construction (Bariso,
2001, p. 169). This presents a clash between embodying blackness and embodying the teacher: the
more 'black' you are in teaching, the more you are seen as unprofessional and excluded (Bhopal,
2015, p. 204). Thus, the inclusion of racialisation brings an embodied characteristic to the experience
of BME teachers.

Therefore, these key characteristics are central concepts from which the Muslim teacher is
constructed from the trajectory of 'race', racialisation, and racism. BME teacher research conducted
in a post 9/11 context saw the explicit recognition of Muslim teachers as a specific group of BME
actors within this wider discourse, and conceptualised their experience in terms of this wider
theoretical framework. However, through this work a uniqueness emerged in the experience of
Muslim teachers, as Basit et al. (2007, p. 288) state, where 'most Muslims are recognized by physical
features as well as by their culture and religion, the biological and cultural strands in anti-Muslim
racism are often impossible to disentangle'. As such, a wider BME approach has been limited in its
capacity to disentangle these conceptual strands and articulate the unique position that Muslim
teachers occupy in the post 9/11, securitised school context. Recognition of this analytical lacuna has
been the catalyst behind the research specifically concerning Muslim teachers, to which I now turn.

### 3.0.2 A turn to Muslim Teachers

Research concerning Muslim teachers is still in its infancy. Shah and Shaikh (2010, p. 20) draw
attention to this gap, stating that there has been little research concerning 'experiences of Muslim

teachers in the British State Schools system and their professional journeys'. They (2010, p. 20) position the study of Muslim teachers as a 'new sub-field in the BME literature', with its theoretical and methodological underpinnings still located firmly within this wider BME framework, but with a distinct focus. But again, it is Osler (2003) who first made this shift by directly transposing her earlier BME approach. Along with Benn's (1998, 2002, 2003) earlier studies, this shift has refined the key characteristics in terms of the intersection of gender, 'race', ethnicity, culture, *and* religion that Muslim teachers embody (Benn, 2002, p. 58).

These works unpick the intersecting strands between racialisation, wider political counter-terrorist narratives, and racism, that uniquely affect Muslim teachers. In Osler's (2003, p. 1) three life histories of female Muslim teachers, covert, overt, and institutional racism continued to shape the working lives of female Muslim teachers. This drew upon wider Islamophobic stereotypes about their dress, certain religious observances (namely fasting during Ramadan), and a perceived incompatibility between Islam and the West (2003, p. 23). These findings are supported by wider BME studies, again highlighting the continuing pervasiveness of anti-Muslim sentiment in the experience of Muslim teachers. McNamara et al. (2009, p. 60) found that 39% of Pakistani teachers experienced religious discrimination, which was four times more than other BME teachers (2009, p. 79). This was alongside ethnic discrimination, which was experienced by 49% of Pakistani teachers (2009, p. 79). Given that 90% of Pakistani teachers identified themselves as Muslim in Haque and Elliot's (2017, p. 20) study, this strongly suggests Muslim teachers experience both ethnic and religious racism as distinct phenomena. Stereotyping continues to be a significant manifestation of covert and overt racism that typically takes the form of wider Islamophobic discourses, notably the invocation of the "terrorist" trope (Basit et al., 2007, p. 287) and microaggressive remarks about the hijab (Bhopal, 2015, p. 203). These discourses have been catalysed by recent events, reflected in the spike of anti-Muslim hate in schools reported after Brexit and Trump's election (Haque & Elliot, 2017, p. 36). Worryingly, Muslim teachers were also aware that this was likely to come from pupils' parents, implying that they would hold similar views, extending the impact of racism beyond the school gates (Basit et al., 2007, p. 287). Furthermore, these specific Islamophobic sentiments are experienced in addition to the racism experienced by BME actors more widely, including the utterance of 'culturally insensitive' remarks and barriers to career progression that impede the progress of BME teachers (Shah & Shaikh, 2010, p. 23). Consequently, Islamophobia 'may be interwoven and linked to other exclusionary forces' that BME teachers face (Osler, 2003, p. 26). Muslim teachers therefore experience a 'double-bind' of racism and religious discrimination in their school contexts (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010).

*Prevent* has exacerbated these racist processes by constructing them as subjects of suspicion (Fernandez, 2018). It has fostered a climate of mistrust that has 'left them feeling 'conflicted' about their roles as teachers and as members of Muslim communities' (Haque & Elliot, 2017, p. 35). They are therefore particularly vulnerable to social and professional isolation from the wider teaching community, failing to access or develop targeted recruitment, specific training and development programmes, or even to develop informal networks (Mogra, 2013, p. 17; Shah & Shaikh, 2010, p. 23). Although there has been a proliferation of research concerning *Prevent*, this conflict points to the significance of the Muslim teacher in this debate as they are tasked with managing "both sides", seemingly being presented with a choice between their career and their faith (Farrell, 2016).

What is striking is the extent to which racism, and this perceived choice between career and faith, precludes Muslim teachers from actually "being Muslim" within their school contexts. As Osler (2003, p. 21) states:

> The narratives presented above illustrate how Muslim women, like all of us, have multiple identities. They may choose to emphasise particular aspects of their identities in particular contexts, but anti-Muslim discourse serves to deny them this freedom.

Benn (2002, p. 72; 2003, p. 142) found that the more visible a female Muslim teachers' Muslim identity, the more covert, overt, and institutional Islamophobia they experienced. Focussing on the contested space of Muslim women in Physical Education (PE), the female Muslim body serves as the locus of a symbolic clash between a 'good Muslim' and a 'good teacher' based on codes of dress (Benn, Dagkas, & Jawad, 2011, p. 24). Similarly, Shah and Shaikh (2010, p. 25) also draw attention to this process in the case of male Muslim teachers, stating that 'the more visible they were as Muslims, the more seriously they felt that discrimination was affecting their career prospects'. They were keenly aware that they did not fit the 'leader prototype', subtly distancing them from their predominantly white SLTs (2010, p. 25), which led to questions surrounding their suitability in leadership positions (2010, p. 26). Embodying Muslimness was also a major source of social and professional exclusion. Dress (notably the hijab) (Benn et al., 2011, p. 24), abstaining from alcohol (Shah & Shaikh, 2010, pp. 27-28), and fasting during Ramadan (Osler, 2003, p. 23), all clashed with the values of a dominant 'white', non-Muslim staff body. In terms of practice this exclusion also extends to the school itself, with practical concerns surrounding prayer, such as a lack of prayer facilities, or time constraints, particularly for the *jummah* prayer, inhibiting their ability to observe religious obligations (Mogra, 2013, p. 24). As such, these tensions fostered a desire to work in

schools with a Muslim majority, where they were 'less likely to be considered 'outsiders'', and so propagated feelings of alienation (Shah & Shaikh, 2010, p. 26).

Thus, echoing Bhopal (2015, p. 204), this literature suggests that the embodiment of a Muslim identity has to be managed in terms of the 'white' professional values of teaching. Benn's (2003, p. 145) participants actively managed their religious identity by 'switching consciousness of identity layers' to fit into their school contexts, moving religion from the 'front stage' to the 'back stage'. This technique of 'consciousness switching' was vital for female Muslim teachers to maintain their professional identity (2003, p. 145). Underpinning this 'consciousness switching' is 'the dynamic manipulation of their identities through the power of agency' (Benn et al., 2011, p. 25). This has led to female Muslim teachers existing in 'identity stasis' as a survival strategy: staying silent about their religion in order to avoid this conflict (2003, p. 137). For some this compromised their Muslim identity, causing 'disillusionment with teaching in the state system' and was too much to bear (2003, p. 137). As such, the process of 'ontological complicity' (Puwar, 2004) that BME actors must engage in in the workplace seems to limit the ways in which Muslim teachers can construct themselves as 'Muslim' within their role as teachers.

Consequently, the study of Muslim teachers from a BME teacher approach has done much to reveal the pervasiveness and exclusionary manifestations of racism that are specific to the dynamics of embodying 'Muslimness' within the education system. From this perspective, the experience of Muslim teachers is one of exclusion, putting their Muslim identity into 'identity stasis' when they enter the school gates. This is encapsulated in the conflict between the Muslim body and the 'white' teacher body, and the subsequent management of 'being Muslim'. These studies have demonstrated that close attention must be made to the intersections of 'race', ethnicity, gender, *and* religion in its analyses (Benn et al., 2011, p. 25). It is this conceptual thread that the present study takes forward by exploring this relationship in the case of Muslim RE teachers.

### 3.0.3 Critical Reflection

Despite these successes, when reading these accounts, I had the sense that the BME approach struggled to articulate the more implicit, "spiritual" tensions that Muslim teachers of RE in particular seemed to experience as part of these exclusionary racist processes. Benn (2003, p. 137) remarks that the process of 'identity stasis' led Muslim teachers to feel that their identity was 'compromised' in some way, but this was founded in an underlying fear of compromising their Muslim identity by embodying 'secular', 'un-Islamic values'. In addition, she draws attention to the 'dilemmas' that Muslim teachers face in 'how to meet the sometimes diverging goals of their 'Muslim' and 'teacher' identities' (Benn, 2003, p. 145). Osler (2003, p. 166) recounts that participants in her study felt a 'fear of undermining pupils' faith', which caused discomfort for those teaching RE. Elsewhere, Scott-

Baumann (2003, p. 247) notes that there can be 'conflict between [Muslim teachers'] religious beliefs and their duty to teach the national curriculum', whilst Sanjakdar (2013, p. 25) draws attention to homosexuality as a difficult topic for Muslim teachers to navigate in the classroom.

These tensions sit oddly within the wider BME approach and its analytical focus on the physical and visible manifestations of racialisation and racism that Muslim teachers experience, and, problematically, these experiences are not pursued. For Benn (2003, p. 148) these dilemmas are simply seen as products of wider racist discourses. But this explanation does not capture the 'threat of profanation' of the sacred by the 'secular' that these tensions are replete with (Mellor & Shilling, 2014, p. 44). Rather, the anxieties that Muslim teachers feel here do not seem to be a conflict between 'white' and 'black' professional values, nor with discrimination, but with professional values and requirements that conflict with, compromise, or undermine their religious commitments.

Therefore, I argue that by framing the experience of Muslim teachers purely through the lens of 'race', the BME literature obscures analysis of how Muslims experience and incorporate their faith in their role. This is by virtue of its preoccupation with the physical and visible markers that constitute the Muslim actor, and subsequent reduction of the embodiment of faith to these corporeal markers, missing a vital element of their construction - the presence of faith itself.

This critique is brought into sharp relief by scholars who have studied religion in the workplace. I turn to explore such scholarship and, through Mogra's (2009, 2010, 2013, 2014) pioneering work, explore how the notion of 'spirituality' has provided a conceptual lens in which to empirically capture the 'hidden' ways in which faith can be incorporated into workplace identities.

## 3.1 Religion, Islam, and Muslims in the Workplace

Situated within the 'de-centred' turn to 'everyday' and 'lived' forms of religion (Bender et al., 2013), the workplace has been identified as a significant site in which to explore the construction of contemporary religious identities (Ammerman, 2014). As I have indicated above, this conceptual trajectory has the capacity to disrupt essentialised, "official", and Eurocentric notions of religiosity by considering how religion manifests within everyday practice (Bender et al., 2013). Given the scholarly tendency to reduce Muslims to these "official" repertoires (Asad, 1986, 1993; Bectovic, 2011; Marranci, 2008, 2010; Varisco, 2005), 'everyday' approaches to the study of Muslims have become prominent in the field as a corrective to this tendency (Werbner, 2018). As such, this work is a fruitful avenue of conceptual discussion.

### 3.1.1 Religion and Muslims in the Workplace

Scholars of 'lived religion' have highlighted the 'secular' workplace as a particularly important social sphere for the study of religion, given its centrality in many people's everyday lives. As Ammerman (2014, p. 195) puts:

> To say that religion simply exists alongside all the other realities of everyday life means that we should expect everyday stories from the office or the hospital to sometimes be both sacred and secular at once.

Cadge and Konieczny's (2014) work is significant in this regard. They (2014, p. 9) argue that religion is 'hiding in plain sight' in workplaces in myriad invisible ways. In these spaces, unique crises emerge surrounding religious practice, the body, the natural world, social relationships and behaviours within the 'secular' policies, frameworks, and expectations that govern them (Riesebrodt, 2010 in Cadge & Konieczny, 2014, p. 9). Therefore, workplace contexts elicit the kind of identity work that religious actors undertake, tasked with constructing coherent identities 'that reach into secular arenas' (2014, p. 9). This is indicative of the kind of tensions that Muslim teachers seem to experience in their role, but have barely been engaged with in the BME literature.

Cadge and Konieczny (2014, p. 3) highlight the agentic capacity of religious individuals to creatively and practically piece together the 'bricolage of meanings' available to them in the workplace, in an attempt to construct identities that incorporate the organisational frameworks of their roles. This results in practices that are co-constituted with the 'secular' and the sacred, with the sacred often appearing in implicit and 'hidden' ways. A key manifestation of this is that 'workers use religious worldviews and *ethoi* to interpret their work tasks and interactions with others' (2014, p. 10), imbuing their work with 'spiritual' value. This phenomenon has also been captured by McGuire (2007, 2008). By articulating religion as implicit and 'hidden', this work broadens the analytical scope of what constitutes the 'religious' within these contexts.

These themes have also been highlighted by studies of Muslims in the workplace, revealing the capacity of Muslims to creatively and pragmatically construct their faith in a contextually blended suite of narratives and practices. Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013, p. 23) argue that Muslim chaplains represent a 'new category of religious actor' because of their capacity to accommodate Islam within the policy frameworks of public institutions. Given the lack of an explicit theology surrounding pastoral care in Islam (2013, Chapter 2), they (2013, p. 110) state that the successful 'professionalisation' of Muslim chaplaincy has opened new interpretive spaces in which experienced chaplains 'stimulate new appreciation of classical Islamic texts' within their policy frameworks. As a result, Muslim chaplaincy reflects a gamut of wider repertoires and frameworks, having 'ingested a

good deal of Christian and secular influence into its practices' (2013, p. 167). Moreover, Muslim chaplains were found to employ a pragmatic and needs-based approaches to Islamic ritual. Using prayer as an example, Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013, p. 82) write that 'chaplains may be willing to adjust their own personal theological position for the benefit of others and a good pastoral outcome'. Thus, Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013, p. 55) find that the construction of the 'good' Muslim chaplain blended both the British institutional and Islamic notions of chaplaincy, through 'the kinds of professional skills, Islamic knowledge, and personal character required'.

On the other hand, they also reveal the tensions that this blending presents. Muslim chaplains 'are conscious of the tensions that could arise if their 'bottom-up' pastorally orientated ways of working were to clash with the rather more 'top-down' authoritative role of mosque-based imams', reflecting possible theological divergences between their practice and "official" repertoires of Islamic tradition (2013, p. 137). Despite their successes, most chaplains were unwilling to label their practice as 'new' or 'innovative' for this reason. There were also anxieties surrounding 'giving the wrong advice', for which they would be accountable on the Day of Judgement (2013, p. 60). So, whilst chaplains relished the intellectual stimulation and 'freedom' offered in their professional practice, 'significant interpretive effort is invested in this process' as 'the scholars are accountable to God for their decisions' (2013, p. 176). As such, there is a clear eschatological dimension to the work of Muslim chaplains.

Essers and Benschop (2009) similarly found that Muslim businesswomen actively engage in this kind of identity-work to manage the 'oppositional demands' of their faith and their role. For these women working as masseuses, driving instructors, and beauticians in Morocco (2009, pp. 411-414), it was their Islamic framework and the social expectations of Muslims that presented a site of tension, as these roles could see them labelled as a 'bad woman' or 'bad Muslima' (2009, p. 415). In response, these participants had developed their own religious narratives to legitimise themselves as female entrepreneurs, engaging in feminist readings of the Qur'an and invoking Khadija, the wife of Muhammad, who was an entrepreneur herself (2009, p. 416). This afforded them the confidence to construct their Muslim identity according to the needs of their business, as Essers and Benschop (2009, p. 418) explain:

> … these businesswomen highlight different identities in different contexts to maximize their opportunities. For instance, Mouria combines her entrepreneurial and gender identities in her beauty salon, but refrains from dogmatic behavioural codes for Muslim women as this disturbs her entrepreneurship. Aylin connects her Muslim, ethnic and gender identities to target a new market niche for her driving school:

Muslim women. Farah uses her headscarf as a trademark to emphasize that her gender and religious identities go very well together with her entrepreneurial identity. She discards her ethnic Moroccan identity, as this hinders her ability to develop an entrepreneurial identity. Fatna seems to deploy her Muslim identity to underline the ethics of her business, and to distance herself from ethnically gendered norms that she experiences in the Turkish ethnic community.

So, by creating boundaries between their simultaneous identities as Muslims, women, and entrepreneurs, they created new ways of "being religious" within their working contexts (2009, p. 420). Much like the work of Cadge and Konieczny (2014), here Essers and Benschop (2009) draw attention to the agency, creativity, and fluidity that Muslims can adopt toward their workplace identities, moving with fluidity between the various repertoires of meaning available to them in their context according to their needs and desires. More widely, scholars have shown that Muslim employees can see 'secular' organisational values as consonant with their religious values (C. Ball & Haque, 2003; L. Berger, Essers, & Himi, 2017).

### 3.1.2 'Spirituality' in the Lives of Muslim teachers

Although he does not explicitly situate himself in relation to this literature, Mogra's (2009, 2010, 2013, 2014) work brings a comparable focus to the faith dimension of Muslim teachers lives. He recognises that the 'voice of faith' is still sorely missing from conceptualisations of the teacher (2013, p. 13, see also Shah, 2016, p. 3). Recognising this conceptual gap, Mogra (2010, p. 159) states that the aim of this approach is to provide 'glimpses into the role and impact that the teachings of Islam have upon their lives' as Muslims employed in 'secular', pluralistic education. To do so, he (2010, p. 165) employs 'spirituality' as a conceptual lens in which to explore this relationship, beginning not from Islamic theology but from the participants' self-understanding of their faith. Still, he (2009, p. 130; 2010, p. 160; 2013, p. 19) draws upon the methodological legacy of the BME field to conduct this empirical work, using life histories to capture Muslim teachers' 'perceptions of their life, career, work, values, attitudes and self-understanding'. As such, Mogra's work is especially relevant to the current discussion as a touchstone between the BME approach and the 'lived religion' trajectory outlined above.

The term 'spirituality' is used to capture the heterogeneity of the participants' conceptions of Islam within his study. He (2010, pp. 162-163) found that Muslim teachers expressed diverse understandings of God and faith by exemplifying different values, but that this operated within an overarching Islamic framework. This framework was constructed from the concepts of *tawhid* as the

'essence, spirit and core of Islam', the 'ritualistic aspects' of the Five Pillars of Islam[7], and *tazkiyah* – the 'inner struggle' and purification to attain higher levels of spirituality (2010, p. 162). Within this framework, he (2010, p. 163) found that participants leaned toward "spirituality", praxis, and 'fulfilling social obligations' as the source of their Muslim identity within society.[8]

These spiritual understandings also shaped their construction of teaching and their role as teachers. Given that Islam has no distinction between the sacred and profane, Mogra (2010, p. 167) draws attention to the centrality of Islam within all aspects of the participants' lives, and that this infused their 'inner driving force' to teach. All the participants made reference to the importance of teaching in Islam as a legitimisation of their career trajectory as a sacred duty (2013, p. 26). Yet it is surprising that notions of *ilm*, (knowledge) and *tarbiyah* (moral and character formation) are absent from these teachers' accounts, as these are central concepts in the holistic understanding of education and the role of the teacher from an Islamic perspective (Halstead, 2004; Shah, 2016). In part this seems to be due to the limited theological knowledge of the participants, as Mogra (2009, p. 205) admits: 'it appears that a limited knowledge exists between them about Muhammad's teaching methods'.

But this absence of reference to the holistic nature of teaching in the Islamic tradition is also underscored by the fact that the participants did not construct themselves as Muslim teachers solely from an Islamic spiritual framework. Rather, they brought together a plethora of repertoires of meaning that were available to them in their school contexts, in ways that reflect the identity-work of Muslims in other organisations. The blending of these repertoires of meaning is encapsulated in his (2014) close reading of a successful 'Anglo-Asian Muslimah in Britain'. He (2014, pp. 19-20) highlights that 'her mother's orientation (vocation); economic circumstances (secure job); gender (fits with family life) and religion (knowledge is sacred) and eschatology (*sadaqah jariyah*)' all came together to shape the understanding of her role.

From this, Mogra (2014, pp. 19-20) makes it clear that the Muslimah actively re-negotiated Islam within the other repertoires of meaning available to her in her school context, performing a 'fluid identity'. Rather than being fixed and static, her teacher identity is 'multi-dimensional and sophisticated' but possesses a 'personal or core identity' which 'gravitates towards Islam' (2014, p. 20). Accordingly, his (2010, p. 164) account of being Muslim emerges as more 'fluid' and 'sophisticated', reflecting a plethora of 'theological, professional, and humanistic tendencies' that Muslim teachers embody in their practice. Thus, the notion of a fluid identity facilitates the process

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[7] These are: the *shahadah* (declaration of faith), *salat* (obligatory prayer), *zakat* (charitable alms giving), sawm (fasting), and *Hajj* (pilgrimage). They are considered obligatory upon every Muslim (*fard al-ayn*).
[8] The extent to which this diversity reflects different traditions or schools of thought in Islam is not discussed. There does seem to be an overrepresentation of Sufi Muslims, but neither Mogra (2013, p. 171), nor his participants, really discuss these internal traditions.

of 'consciousness switching' that the participants engaged in, in order to be the teacher, and articulates that this was a vital part of the way they incorporated the 'secular' framework of teaching into their teacher identity:

> None of these teachers reported that it was impossible for them to keep their faith and to fulfil the demands of their duties as professional teachers. Neither have they reported that they have been placed in compromising situations. The more conscientious teachers among them have been able to negotiate the system through the flexibility provided by their faith (2009, p. 213).

This is followed by the recognition that, when it came to work, 'their professional identity was at the forefront' (2009, p. 208), suggesting the same frontstage/backstage dynamic identified by Benn (2003). Participants stressed a clear distinction between teaching children in a 'secular' setting and 'matters of faith' (2009, p. 208). This was felt for a number of reasons: managerial pressure, maintaining professional integrity, and concerns with how much they could influence their pupils in their position of authority (2009, p. 208). Interestingly, these concerns echo those of RE teachers and the professional notion of the 'neutral RE teacher' (Jackson & Everington, 2017). So, whilst an Islamic spiritual framework underpinned their notion of being a teacher, this was entwined with the 'secular' framework of teaching to form their frontstage identity.

The 'fluidity' that Muslim teachers seem to adopt in incorporating their faith meant its manifestations appeared much more diverse, implicit, and 'hidden'. Mogra's (2009, p. 201; 2010, p. 171; 2014, p. 19) work illuminates the role that Islam played socially, psychologically, religiously, and morally, underpinning their role as teachers. Faith primarily served as a 'guide for their professional and social roles in school, and was embodied in their interpersonal, social, and moral actions' (2009, p. 201; 2010, p. 164). The prophet Muhammad was primarily regarded as a role model, rather than a teacher *per se*, from whose example they 'availed themselves of certain characteristics applicable in their classrooms and in their professional work'. These characteristics: calmness, patience, self-restraint, being non-judgemental, and being good listeners, were also configured in light of their professional framework and seen as generally good professional values that a teacher should have (2009, p. 205). It was also a survival strategy, used to respond to, and cope with the 'social and moral challenges that they face in a multi-faith and multicultural [professional] community' (2010, p. 159). In this way, the capacity in which these Muslim teachers incorporated their faith into their professional role is resplendent of the 'hidden' religious ethoi that religious individuals bring to their work (Cadge & Konieczny, 2014, p. 3).

However, there were limitations in the degree to which their spirituality remained hidden backstage. Specifically, maintaining ritual observances remained vital to these Muslim teachers' embodiment of their faith. These practices provided a 'concrete dimension' between their spiritual beliefs and their context (2010, p. 167), and centred around the practices previously highlighted: dress (notably the *hijab*), prayer (notably *jummah*), and *sawm* (fasting during Ramadan), and observing prohibitions: alcohol and gambling (2010, pp. 165, 168). Again, maintaining these observances was a considerable site of tension, 'comprising' their capacity to be Muslim (2010, p. 168). Echoing Benn (2003) and Scott-Baumann (2003), this religious 'compromise' led to feelings of isolation and exclusion where schools were not 'practical or flexible' with regards to the needs of Muslims (2013, p. 24). Here the physical, visible, and embodied is not entirely jettisoned from Mogra's analysis, and remains an important element in the experience of the Muslim teacher.

Overall though, the degree of fluidity he observed leads Mogra (2009, pp. 212-213) to construct the Muslim teacher as 'a teacher first and foremost':

> Overall, their conception of a Muslim teacher is tied primarily to that of being a teacher first and foremost. Therefore, it could be suggested, cautiously, that, generally, for these Muslim teachers in the educational settings of Britain, whilst the centrality of faith is significant in their lives, there does not appear to be a necessary transference of being a Muslim and having a faith position into being a teacher. Hence, it would appear that they are first concerned with teaching. Although their value system is informed by Islam, they maintain their own integrity and that of the children they teach by a clear demarcation between nurture and education.

This view of the Muslim teacher captures notions of Muslim identity articulated by the above scholars of religion in the workplace. At its very core is the identity work that the participants engage in to be a teacher 'between nurture and education'. This is situated within a subtle distinction between their teacher work: practice, pedagogy, and notions of professionalism, and their faith character: values, persona, and behaviour. This emphasises the agentic capacity and fluidity in which the participants approached the construction of their identity, and recognises the creative identity work that they employ in entwining these two, seemingly paradoxical, repertoires of meaning together. Moreover, there is some suggestion that the participants were willing to engage in identity work and move their faith from the 'frontstage' to the 'backstage' in order to do this. Again, this reflects creative and diverse expressions of the Islamic tradition, in more personal, implicit, 'hidden', and contextually-blended capacities, alongside more visible, physical, and "official" repertoires.

Consequently, I contend that this 'spiritual' approach offers a significant corrective to the static, reductive construction of Muslim teachers in the BME approach, which is limited to the physical and visible. Whilst the physical remains central through the importance of embodiment and ritual observance, attending to the impact of Islam 'spiritually' in the lives of Muslim teachers provides the conceptual scope to provide a fuller account of the relationship between their faith and their role. It also affords Muslim teachers much more agency in their construction, by allowing for more diverse expressions of their faith. Hence, the notion of the 'teacher who happens to be Muslim' was a powerful conceptual foundation from which to explore the relationship between faith and the role of the teacher in the person of the Muslim RE teacher, and the resultant theoretical and methodological framework.

### 3.1.3 Critical Reflections – Practical Matters

It can be argued however, that Mogra's account of Muslim teachers, seen through the lens of 'spirituality', presents a somewhat naïve and decontextualized view in relation to the wider literature. Specifically, he does not consider *how* Muslim teachers bracket out their values and religious practices from their teacher work, nor does he contend with the tensions or 'threat of profanation' that came with this identity work. Yet, this bracketing was central to their teacher identity. In contrast to the work of Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013) and Essers and Benschop (2009), Mogra rarely engages with the actual practice that Muslim teachers engage in, nor does he present a picture of 'secular' teacher identity itself. The empirical accounts he does provide offer only fleeting glimpses of these practical realities. His analyses also seem to downplay the vital intersections between 'race' and religion. As he (2009, p. 67) unequivocally remarks, 'Muslims are not a racial group' but rather 'there is a world view that informs Muslim ideology'. The 'race' trajectory shows this to be patently naïve and ignores the well-established conceptual overlap between 'race' and religion (Meer, 2013; Meer & Modood, 2009; Meer & Nayak, 2015). In this way, this analysis falls into the theoretical tendency to reduce religion to its cognitive 'epistemic content' and ignore the body and its practices. Using spirituality as the sole lens intensifies this tendency illustrating its slippery, contested, and conceptually intangible nature (Holmes, 2007, p. 23).

Thus, it remains to be seen how Muslim teachers actually construct and manage these two, often-contradictory, spheres in their everyday practice. Consequently, I argue that the analyses by Mogra, and those arising from the 'race' trajectory, are hindered by a lack of engagement with the notion of teacher identity itself. Within the BME literature and Islamic teacher literature there is little engagement with theories that underpin 'secular' notions of the teacher, the position these Muslim actors are actually occupying. In contrast, the intersection of religion with notions of professionalism is at the theoretical and conceptual core of the work of Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013) and Essers and

Benschop (2009). Accordingly, I now move on to explore teacher identity, and the discourse of RE teacher professionalism, drawing attention to the small body of literature that considers Muslim RE teachers specifically.

## 3.2 Teacher Identity and the RE Teacher

In the last 30 years a substantial body of literature has been produced about teacher identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 108). It is informed by an understanding of identity as something that is not fixed, but an ongoing process of interpretation, reflection, and construction by people who seek to be recognised as a 'certain kind of person' in a given context (Gee, 2001, in Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). As such, a common feature of teacher identity research is capturing the ongoing process of how one 'becomes a teacher', and how this shifts over time under the influence of various factors (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 177). This analytical focus is distinct from, but linked to, research that attempts to establish the kinds of theoretical knowledge and skills that teachers should have in terms of ''how to be', 'how to act', and 'how to understand'' (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 178).

However, given the dynamism of the concept of teacher identity, scholars have noted the difficulty in developing a definition (Beijaard et al., 2004). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, p. 178) suggest that a more fruitful approach is to identify the theoretical and methodological traditions and tools in which notions of teacher identity are situated. Thus, it is not within the purview of this literature review to provide a comprehensive review of all these different approaches to teacher identity (for such overviews see Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). Rather, I provide an account of a significant approach within this field - narrative teacher identity - within which to conceptually situate the notion of teacher identity. As I go on to discuss, this approach captures the key underlying themes of the present literature review, themes of the 'everyday', the practical, and the embodied, by privileging how individuals themselves construct and manage their teacher identity (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2017, p. 39).

### 3.2.1 Narrative Teacher Identity and the Body

A narrative approach to teacher identity has become well-established in the field (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Championed by Connelly and Clandinin (1999, p. 4), this approach considers how teachers 'make sense of their worlds' through the 'stories they live by'. Teachers' identities are constructed from such stories, reflecting the 'personal practical knowledge' that they have developed over the course of their careers (Clandinin & Huber, 2005, p. 7). This is situated within their wider 'professional knowledge landscape', meaning their relationships within the space, place,

and time, of their classrooms, schools, and policy and societal contexts (Clandinin, 1985). Accordingly, this approach highlights the teacher's practice as the enactment and embodiment of these relationships, shaping themselves and shaping this landscape through their work, with all the failings, successes, and opportunities for reflection that teaching evokes (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005). Thus, narrative teacher identity attends to how teachers experience teaching, not how teachers should be, as considered in more positivistic, policy-driven approaches (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 147).

Given its emphasis on context and practice, the teacher's body and the notion of 'performance' are a central concern of these stories (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 106). Hence, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor has become a powerful conceptual tool to articulate the performance of the teacher on 'the stage' of the classroom (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003, p. 711). Elbaz's (1983) work captures the 'terrors' of performativity between teachers' personal values and the prerequisite 'practical knowledge' that teachers must develop. They must reconcile the 'rules of practice' (statements of what to do/not to do), 'practical principles' (their own experience of what to do/not to do), and 'images' – the 'images of how teaching should be… [and how] to give these images substance' (1983, pp. 132-134). However, through the body, Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch (2003) state that 'they cannot hide themselves'. Their body is the tool 'of the language of practice' and so is 'simultaneously concrete and culturally bound' by their other identities (2003, p. 711). S. Ball (2003, p. 216) highlights that the 'performativity culture' of the contemporary neoliberal educational context has exacerbated such 'terrors'. The embodiment of State policy, such as the Teacher's Standards, *Prevent*, and FBVs, leave little room for 'an autonomous or collective ethical self' (S. Ball, 2003, p. 227). In this way, teachers' stories of practice reflect the intersections of their bodies, values, ethnicities, genders, faiths, and classes, with the social and professional 'landscape' of their schools (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005).

As has been previously highlighted by the BME literature, managing these 'terrors' involves the manipulation of 'frontstage' and 'backstage' aspects of their identity (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003, p. 711). Central to this is the adoption of various 'body positions'. Of the five 'body positions' they explore, the most significant is simply 'the position of presence' (2003, p. 711). Being visible, on stage, 'close to pupils', and 'unable to hide' means that practice is a dynamic activity in which 'teachers are forced to assume different body positions simultaneously' given all that they implicitly and explicitly bring to the role (2003, p. 704). Despite their best intentions or reflexive agency, the 'presence' of themselves remains 'complicated and ambiguous' within the social milieu of the classroom (2003, p. 704). Thus, there is the agentic capacity for teachers to construct themselves,

but also awareness that this capacity rests on the perception of others, and their relationships with these others, within their contexts.

Ecological notions of teacher agency uncover the teacher's management of this relational construction. As noted above, there is recognition that teacher agency has received little attention in the wider literature, often appearing implicit within its analyses (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 26). Priestley et al. (2015, p. 29) remind us that agency is something that is achieved by teachers in their capacity to shape themselves and their work within this social and professional milieu. As such, they (2015, p. 30) propose a 'chordal triangle' of teacher agency that reflects these different dimensions, shown in Figure 3.1 below.
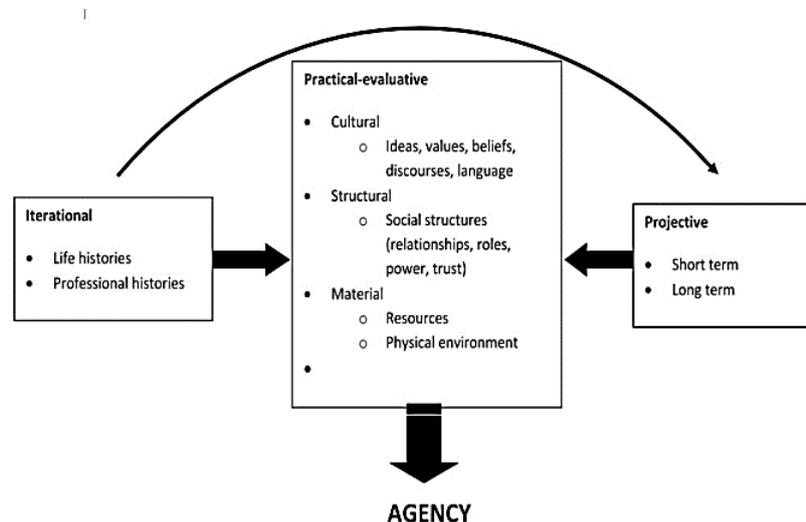


Figure 3.1 - *Chordal Triangle of ecological teacher agency*

The iterational dimension 'highlights that the achievement of agency is always informed by past experience – and in the particular case of teacher agency, this concerns both professional and personal experience' (2015, p. 31). The projective dimension 'highlights that the achievement of agency is always orientated toward the future in some combinations of short(er)-term and long(er)-term objectives, values, and aspirations' (2015, p. 32). And the practical-evaluative dimension 'emphasizes that agency is always enacted in a concrete situation. It is both constrained and supported by discursive, material, and relational resources available to actors' (2015, p. 33). As such, the ecological approach conceptualises teacher agency as intersecting with their biographies (iterational), as temporal and goal-centred (projective), and as contextually relational (practical-evaluative).

So, by paying conceptual attention to notions of teacher identity and agency, Muslim teachers can emerge as teachers within my analysis. Specifically, it provides a way in which to write about their experience as Muslims in relation to their professional and social contexts - as Muslims working as RE teachers within 'secular', non-confessional educational institutions. This brings attention to their capacity to shape their work according to their desires and goals as both Muslims and as teachers, and the tensions that exist in doing so. Within this understanding of teacher identity more widely, I now go on to explore the notion of the RE teacher and its professional discourses.

### 3.2.2 The RE Teacher: Conceptualising Professionalism and Practice

In order to begin talking about the RE teacher, it is necessary to re-state the dominant discourses surrounding RE itself as the foundation of its 'professional knowledge landscape'. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, such a task is problematic as the nature of RE is highly contested and currently in a maelstrom of calls for reform. The notion of RE teacher professionalism reflects its currently tenuous position, put frankly by Woodhead (2018, p. 11):

> Teachers of RE… are cultural and religious heroes caught up in a conflicted education
> system, energetically offering wisdom to young minds, trying to protect themselves
> and each other while the educational pillars fall around them.

It is complicated further still by the unique professional framework that surrounds it. Freathy et al. (2016b) outline the plethora of vested interests that shape RE and the work of RE teachers. Alongside the national curriculum and GCSE examination bodies sit the SACREs, LEAs, and religious (and non-religious) interest groups. Its linkage with the SMSC and PSHCE, and more recently the *Prevent* assemblage, has also pulled the RE teacher into other capacities (Gearon, 2013; Miller, 2013). Thus, much like RE, notions of the RE teacher are similarly complex and contested.

However, a consistent feature of RE is its construction as a multi-faith and non-confessional enterprise grounded in the phenomenological world religions approach. As such, a 'secular', non-confessional approach to the study of religion continues to broadly be the dominant discourse in which RE teachers are located (Bryan & Revell, 2011). With awareness of this, scholars have highlighted that the unique ontological and epistemic content of RE has led to unique notions of professionalism in relation to wider discourses of teacher professionalism in Britain (Freathy et al., 2016a, 2016b; Jackson & Everington, 2017). More so than any other subject, the role of the RE teacher requires individuals to consider and manage aspects of their own self: their beliefs, values, and body, given the salience of these aspects within RE's purview (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017). As such, a unique concern amongst these RE professional discourses is the impact of one's own beliefs within the classroom. This can be summarised as a tension between embodying faith and embodying

the 'secular' underpinnings of the British educational framework within which RE operates (Bryan & Revell, 2011; Bryan & Worsley, 2015a, 2015b; Cooling, 2002; Revell & Walters, 2010). Whilst tensions between private beliefs and professional identity have been recognised in wider teacher research (Connor, 2015, pp. 78-80), RE teachers have formed the locus of these discussions, as this is the space where such tensions become most salient in policy and in practice (Bakker & Heimbrock, 2007; Franken, 2017; Grimmitt, 1981, 1987; Jackson & Everington, 2017).

Reflecting RE's commitment to a non-confessional, phenomenological approach to religion, the notion of the RE teacher has become enshrined in ideas of 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017). The codification of 'neutrality' suggests 'concealment of any personal commitment on the teacher's part' (Jackson & Everington, 2017, p. 10). This reflects underlying concerns surrounding the teacher's capacity to influence or indoctrinate pupils given their authority, and potential positions as role models, which would compromise RE's fundamentally non-confessional orientation (Religious Education Council, 2010a, p. 2). As such, RE teachers' professionalism has become bound up with their capacity to be 'neutral', requiring practitioners to position their faith firmly 'backstage' (Bryan & Revell, 2011).

The concept of the 'neutral' RE teacher has been heavily contested. Franken and Loobuyck (2017) bluntly state that it is an 'impossible aim', recognising that the teacher's personal self is always part of the classroom. In the UK, this has led to reformulations of the notion of 'neutral', to 'impartial' (Jackson & Everington, 2017) and 'dialogic' (Fancourt, 2007) as approaches in which the RE teacher can make their commitments explicit as part of the broader epistemological landscape of the RE classroom. Freathy et al. (2017) suggest that RE teacher identities represent bricologic identities that are highly fluid and creative, allowing the RE teacher to adopt a plethora of pedagogical positions in the classroom. Elsewhere, critical realist approaches to RE, notably Wright (2008), have sought to explicitly incorporate the RE teacher's commitments as a way to test the validity of the truth-claims that religions purport. Here, the RE teacher's beliefs become subject to scrutiny in the classroom, alongside the beliefs of pupils, and those in the subject content. It is problematic, however, that this research has tended to be highly theoretical, eschewing a focus on actual practice for general pedagogical discussion (Bakker & Heimbrock, 2007, p. 12). This had led to the tendency to conceptualise RE teacher identity purely within broader pedagogical positions as opposed to their empirical reality.

In contrast, and despite these theoretical criticisms, there is substantial evidence that the 'neutral RE teacher' continues to construct the professional discourse of the RE teacher, giving it a distinct 'secular shape' (Bryan & Revell, 2011, p. 415). This presents challenges to religious individuals

becoming RE teachers and to their capacity to embody their faith in the role. Empirical studies have made it clear that embodying faith was perceived to be at odds with constructed notions of teacher professionalism (Everington, 2016, p. 18). In Bryan and Revell's (2011, p. 413) study of 160 RE Initial Teacher Trainees (ITTs), Christian RE ITTs felt 'that an explicit articulation of their faith was inappropriate within the performative context of school'. As a result 'many Christian students experienced the perceived pressure to hide or minimise their religious commitment in public in different ways' (2011, p. 414). This was actively maintained through their agency, working 'to deny or minimise the impact of their faith on their ideas about teaching' (2011, p. 415). Similarly, Everington (2016, p. 180) notes that the religious participants in her study 'feared that they would be viewed as pushing a religious message or even attempting to convert pupils'. The need to stress that they were 'not there to indoctrinate' is also noted by Miller and McKenna (2011, p. 181) as an almost automatic response. Moreover, Sikes and Everington (2004) draw attention to a pervasive stereotype of RE teachers as agents of indoctrination, particularly for Christianity. In response, some embodied their resistance to this stereotype by dying their hair unusual colours, or choosing a style of dress, to distance themselves from this image (Sikes & Everington, 2004, p. 30). In contrast, non-religious RE ITT's felt much more open to incorporating their worldview in the classroom. All this is exacerbated by the 'policy grey area' surrounding the inclusion of an individual's faith in their role as teacher, problematising the capacity for teachers to adopt 'impartial' or 'dialogical' pedagogical positions (Everington, 2014, pp. 167-168). Thus, as Cooling (2010, p. 23) surmises, there is the general perception that religious faith is 'irrational "clutter"' that has no place in teaching.

*Prevent* and FBVs have also provided new challenges. Given the relevance of RE to these initiatives, RE teachers have been tasked with exemplifying its values, creating a 'constitutive 'outside', a securitised boundary to normality that produces contradiction, dissonance and fear' (Farrell, 2016, p. 293). Thus, *Prevent* and FBVs have potentially securitised the inclusion of RE teacher's own beliefs, situating them between competing 'regimes of truth' in the classroom (Farrell, 2016, p. 294). Farrell (2016, pp. 294-295) draws attention to the precarious position of Muslim RE teachers in this regard, with their visible 'Muslimness' becoming a source of 'othering' in terms of the dominant norms of 'Britishness' that this discourse constructs. RE teachers have also been identified as key agents of *Prevent* in this way, given their capacity to monitor the beliefs of pupils and the epistemological proximity of *Prevent* and FBVs with RE's aims of social cohesion (Farrell, 2016; Gearon, 2013; Lander, 2016; Miller, 2013). This arguably compromises their capacity to approach religion from a non-confessional and neutral perspective, becoming 'post secular pedagogues' in the age of *Prevent* (Bryan, 2012). However, other research has suggested that teachers may not feel the impact of *Prevent*, expressing 'narratives of continuity' about its impact (Busher et al., 2017). Busher et al.

(2017, p. 65) highlight that *Prevent* has become incorporated within teacher's existing duties around safeguarding. Thus, despite the scholarly consensus that *Prevent* and FBVs are inimical to Muslim identity, whether this is felt by RE teachers on the ground, particularly these 'Muslim RE teachers', remains to be explored (Busher et al., 2017, p. 66).

Yet, these tensions have also revealed creative spaces in which RE teachers can construct themselves. As mentioned above, given the diverse pedagogical landscape of RE, Freathy et al. (2017) conceptualise RE teachers as 'pedagogical bricoleurs', reflecting their capacity to shift their pedagogical approaches and positions in the classroom. Similarly, Everington (2016, pp. 182-183) draws attention to the 'right and freedom' for RE teachers to interpret the aims and goals of RE to meet the needs of their pupils. Moreover, she (2016, p. 183) documents a cautious move toward being 'appropriately open' in the classroom, championed by RE ITTs. Specifically, the use of RE teacher's 'personal life knowledge' (PLK), the knowledge that teachers have 'acquired in their personal lives and draw on or present in their classroom teaching', has been used by religiously-committed teachers to ontologically bridge the gap between their personal and professional selves (Everington, 2012, p. 344). Thus, this research is suggesting that new fluid and creative vistas are emerging within the 'professional landscape' of the RE teacher, possibly afforded by the currently contested nature of the subject itself.

It seems, however, that there is still a lack of discussion surrounding ways in which RE teachers incorporate their faith in their role. Managing one's own faith is rarely discussed within RE ITT programmes, and so little guidance is offered to RE teachers to support this process (Everington, 2012, p. 353; 2016, p. 186). This was certainly my experience in RE ITT and was the subject of my own PGCE research project. Therefore, as Everington (2012, p. 166; 2016, p. 185) notes, the various strategies that RE teachers employ to manage these tensions, and construct their identities as RE teachers, seem to have developed naturally and *ad hoc*. Therefore, exploring this relationship remains a vital avenue of study.

### 3.2.3 Muslim RE Teachers

The above research has been dominated by the experiences of white Christian teachers, reflecting the general biography of the profession (Fancourt, 2017, p. 9). As a consequence, scant attention has been paid to the intersections of faith, 'race', gender, and notions of RE teacher professionalism in the experience of RE teachers (Everington, 2014, 2015). The misrepresentation of Islam within RE (Revell, 2012), and the racialisation of norms and values by FBVs (Farrell, 2016; Lander, 2016; Revell & Bryan, 2018), raises considerable questions about the experiences of Muslims within RE. However, 'Muslim RE teachers' have been noticeably absent from this discussion. This is compounded by the

professional discourse of the 'neutral, objective RE teacher', and the recent intrusion of *Prevent*, and its implications for these 'hypervisible' actors (Farrell, 2016, p. 294).

Everington's (2014, p. 156) small-scale study of the use of 'personal life knowledge' (PLK) by Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh RE trainee-teachers goes some way to addressing this gap. For Everington (2014, p. 166) these actors were truly operating in the 'public' and 'private', as the construction of their 'teacher metaphor'[9] 'reflected values, qualities and attitudes that were personally and professionally important to them, and that were, or can be, related to significant life experiences'. A major motivation for these minority faith actors to become RE teachers was the opportunity they saw in the role to challenge pupils' ignorance, and to counter stereotypes, by providing space for openness and questioning (2014, p. 161). It seems their understanding of the need for this in RE classrooms was related to their own experience of growing up as minority faith actors in Britain (2014, p. 166). This marks an intersection with BME teacher research, which similarly highlights these motivations, and also a potential synergy between the critiqued 'liberalising' post-9/11 RE and minority ethnic and faith teacher identities.

These commitments also shaped their pedagogy and performance in the classroom (Everington, 2014, p. 170). A common concern amongst teachers was to address pupils' misconceptions by drawing on their knowledge of 'real life' religion' in the classroom (2014, p. 167). 'Real life religion' was constructed from their own personal 'experiences of challenging, questioning and/or exploring beyond the beliefs and practices that they had been brought up with' (2014, p. 166). As a result, their own biographies - their faith understood on their terms - was the foundation for their professional practice (2014, p. 166). In this way, PLK was a powerful tool that Muslim RE teachers employed to bridge the 'ontological gap' between their faith and their 'secular' professional position (Everington, 2015).

Such a pedagogy was particularly valuable to the Muslim RE teachers in Everington's (2014, p. 166) study, who struggled with the 'existential predicament' of critical religious education. As discussed previously, both Everington (2014, p. 166) and Ipgrave (1999, p. 149) highlight how being critical of religion is difficult for Muslims in RE because they simply do not have such a predicament, because Islam is an ever-present reality. Similarly, Ipgrave (1999, pp. 149-150, 156) notes how this can create power-struggles in the RE classroom between RE teachers and Muslim pupils, where Muslim pupils 'narrow-mindedly' refused to accept any other understanding but their own, often literalistic stance.

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[9] The participant's beliefs about the RE teacher's role (Bullough, Crow, & Knowles, 1992).

This represents a serious theological tension between the personal and professional that must be negotiated in the classroom and could be experienced by these 'Muslim RE teachers'.

PLK overcomes this by fostering a 'weak form of critical openness' (Everington, 2014, p. 169; Ipgrave, 1999, p. 150). This is where 'the believer adopts an attitude of appraisal towards his beliefs, but does not actually question their foundation' (Halstead 1986, p. 50, cited in Ipgrave, 1999, p. 150). Rather than critically attacking, such an approach fosters multiple understandings from various perspectives, seeing 'misunderstandings' as 'different understandings' (1999, pp. 151-152). By employing PLK Everington (2014, p. 169) suggests that these Muslim teachers can be epistemologically flexible enough to facilitate these plural understandings of Islam, by expressing and legitimising 'lived' religious understanding. Not only does this allow them to enrich 'static', textbook representations of religion (Geaves, 1998; Hayward, 2006; Ipgrave, 1999; Jackson, 2004; Jackson et al., 2010), but this meant that they were seen as sources of 'insider knowledge' by both faculty and pupils, which allowed them to be truly specialised in the classroom (Everington, 2014, pp. 162-163). Moreover, this did not reflect their Initial Teacher Training (ITT) but was developed idiosyncratically as a pedagogical technique (2014, p. 166). As such, PLK indicates a way in which minority faith teachers could forge their own distinct professional identities that incorporate their faith.

However, Everington (2014, pp. 169-170) notes that there were continued concerns with the 'policy grey area' of including one's own faith in the classroom, which problematised the use of PLK. The implicit suggestion here is of a particular tension between Muslimness and the wider discourses of RE professionalism, potentially exacerbated by Farrell's (2016) observations of the 'othering' that the *Prevent* assemblage enacts on 'Muslim RE teachers'. Everington (2014, p. 165) also uncovers tensions in the teaching of Muslim pupils, with one participant fearing 'perpetuating an Islamic bubble' in the classroom, incidentally fostering an 'us versus them' dynamic by sharing her beliefs. Everington's (2012, 2014, 2015) focus on practice within the classroom context therefore begins discussion of the empirical realities of 'Muslim RE teachers' and their need to carefully manage their faith whilst in the role of the RE teacher, negotiating both their wider policy frameworks and also the assumptions brought by pupils. Thus, attending to practice looks to be a powerful way to explore a more relational aspect of Muslim teacher identity construction, grounded in their actual work at the chalk face.

## 3.3 Concluding Remarks

This literature review has provided a map of the conceptual trajectories in which Muslim RE teachers are situated. They represent a nexus between aspects of 'race', of faith, and of notions of teacher

professionalism, and attending to these intersections are vital in their scholarly treatment. These analyses have brought a focus on the relationship between being Muslim and being the RE teacher within the British education system, and drawn attention to the subsequent tensions and, albeit to a lesser degree, the potential synergies in this relationship. A key theme is the 'identity stasis' that Muslim teachers exist in, having to locate their faith 'backstage' to avoid conflict with dominant norms of 'Britishness'. This seems to reflect the exclusionary processes of racism and 'white', 'secular' notions of the teacher, which serve to marginalise the 'Muslimness' of Muslim teachers. A key question emerging from this is *how* Muslims experience and engage in this identity work, in practice, to construct their teacher identity. As demonstrated above, this question has been inadequately explored, with the bulk of the literature failing to engage seriously, if at all, with the practical and empirical realities. Everington's (2012, 2014, 2015) work, however, has begun to demonstrate the creative capacity in which 'Muslim RE teachers' are making their role their own in this regard using PLK. In contrast to 'identity stasis', this work is illuminating the capacity for Muslim teachers to act as bricoleurs in their identity construction, fluidly and creatively incorporating their 'Muslimness' into their work.

Building largely from the existing theoretical and methodological BME tradition, much of this work has been theoretical or conducted through qualitative life histories. Yet the 'race' approach and the emergent 'spiritual' approach seem to artificially bifurcate the experience of Muslim teachers between their 'race' and faith, which has obscured the intersections that make the Muslim teacher. This is encapsulated by Panjwani's (2017) frustration with the 'double reductionism' of scholarly representations of Muslims in education more widely. He (2017, p. 597) reminds us that 'no Muslim is just a Muslim', and posits that 'there is a need to reconsider the primacy of the religious attribute… by humanising Muslims, by taking account of their religio-secular contexts and by reconsidering their varying attachments to religion'. Importantly, this involves seeing these actors as teachers, not just as Muslims. Whilst Mogra's (2009, p. 212) notion of the 'teacher who happens to be Muslim' seems the closest corrective to this, Everington's (2012, 2014, 2015) consideration of the actual practice of Muslim RE teachers has been productive in revealing the empirical realities of their identity work beyond 'identity stasis'. I therefore suggest that putting this work in conversation with scholarship that has sought to articulate religious identities in the workplace, especially in relation to Muslims in Britain today (Gilliat-Ray et al., 2013), offers a fruitful way forward.

It is clear that this is a developing area of scholarly inquiry and the study of Muslim teachers' identities remains a significant lacuna in a number of fields. Taking my cue from this identification of the limits of current scholarship, in the proceeding chapters I explore further the relationship between Muslim faith and the professional role of the RE teacher. I will be primarily concerned with

how the construction of their RE teacher identity is achieved in practice, and what the potential synergies and tensions between these two identity attributes are.

To do so, I propose that a synthesis of these theoretical and methodological approaches is necessary. These are linked through the themes of identity, agency, bricolage, and performativity of racialised, religious, and teacher aspects of being 'Muslim RE teachers'. Although each field brings slightly different meanings and emphases, such as performativity with regard to one's own faith compared to meeting the expected standards of teaching, I believe there is an enough overlap for there to be meaningful conversation. Specifically, these terms are set within a 'lived religion' approach, which reflects the identified need to see Muslims in education as social actors and to attend to their 'everyday' practice, both religious and professional.

# Chapter 4: Methodology

In the Literature Review I argued that there is a significant need to conceptualise Muslim teachers as social actors in order to better understand how Islamic traditions are engaging with British education. This was in light of the identification of two main theoretical strands that underpin the construction of Muslim teachers in scholarship. The first was the 'race' trajectory, which centred on discussion surrounding visible markers of Muslimness, and the resultant discriminatory practices that Muslim teachers face because of these. Secondly, there was found to be an emerging 'spiritual' discourse, which explored the ways in which Islamic beliefs interact with the educational values of teaching in the British education system through Muslim teachers. However, considering my critique of these approaches, drawing on Panjwani's (2017) critique of the 'racialisation' and 'religification' of Muslim identities in education more broadly, there was found to be little discussion of how Muslim teachers actually engaged their faith with their professional roles at the chalk face, and how their religious commitments sat in relation to their educational and professional goals and desires. This conceptual oversight is highlighted by the empirical research concerning RE teachers, which explores the complex identity work they engage in to manage their faith in their pedagogy, specifically Everington's (2012, 2014, 2015) studies. Consequently, I argue that there is a pressing need to further explore how Muslims construct and manage the relationship between their faith and their professional role as teachers within their school contexts.

In this chapter, I restate the research questions, establish the theoretical and methodological framework, and document the research journey. I employ a 'lived religion' approach, influenced by scholars of 'everyday lived Islam', and a bricologic notion of religious identity to capture the fluidity and creativity that scholarship has suggested Muslims employ in the construction of their workplace identities (Dessing, Jeldtoft, & Woodhead, 2016b; Jeldtoft, 2011; Jeldtoft & Nielsen, 2011; Liebelt & Werbner, 2018). From this theoretical foundation, a 'granular ethnographic' methodology frames the design of the study (P. Atkinson, 2017). I then discuss the use of semi-structured interviews and participant shadows as the data collection methods, and thematic analysis to explore the data. This research design is in keeping with the qualitative methodological tradition employed in the study of Muslim teachers so far, but brings an emphasis toward capturing their actual day-to-day practice. By documenting the research journey throughout, I highlight the limitations of the study and present a roadmap for future scholars in the field.

## 4.0 Research Questions

### 1. *What is the relationship between "Muslim RE teachers"' faith and their professional role in their school contexts?*

The main research question sought to explore how the participants' understood and experienced their faith in their work as non-confessional RE teachers. It asked how their faith was positioned in terms of the dominant professional framework in which they are operating, and in what capacities their faith was brought into this 'secular', non-confessional, and highly politicised public arena. This question focusses on the agentic capacity of these participants to construct their faith and their professional roles in their school contexts, and primarily considers the intersections as previously identified in the literature review.

### 2. *How did this identity work occur in practice?*

This question attends to the current lack of discussion around the actual practices Muslims engage in to incorporate their faith into their work as teachers. In what ways were they expressing Muslimness in school? Were there overt and implicit manifestations of their faith? And to what extent could they incorporate their faith into their everyday practice? This question takes the lived religion scholarship and Everington's (2012, 2014, 2015) focus on practice as its analytical core to push current understanding further. In doing so, this question has revealed underlying synergies between the participants' Muslim and RE teacher identity attributes.

### 3. *Were there any tensions between their faith and professional role?*

Whereas the first question attempted to provide an account of these participants' identities as 'Muslim RE teachers', this question sought to consider the extent to which these two repertoires of meaning-making were incompatible. Here I ask in what areas or moments did their faith and professional role exist in tension? Whilst such tensions have been consistently highlighted in scholarship, accounts from a faith perspective have largely been ignored (Mogra, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014). Nor have there been any identified tactics for overcoming such tensions beyond Benn's (1998, 2003) identification of 'identity stasis', and tentatively the 'ontological bridging' that PLK offers as observed by Everington (2015). As such, this question also considers how the participants negotiated these tensions.

## 4.1 Theoretical Approach: Ontology, Epistemology, and Agency

Given the research questions' focus on the participants' self-understanding and construction of themselves as Muslims and as RE teachers, as well as the methodological precedent set in the literature, the study is broadly positioned within a social constructivist approach. This approach

takes being and knowledge to be discursively and intersubjectively created by social actors in a dialectic with the wider social world. In contrast to positivistic notions of reality, social constructivism recognises that we cannot access 'reality' and instead seeks to provide accounts of how individuals interpret and assign meaning to phenomena (May, 2011, pp. 39-41). As such, this approach adopts interpretative methodologies in which the focus of inquiry is to elicit the participants' constructions of phenomena and heuristically explore and refine them within, and into, a broader conceptual schema (Lincoln & Guba, 1994, p. 111).

Religion has also been conceptualised as an inherently social phenomenon. Berger and Luckmann's (1969; 1967) classic works explicate the 'world-building' function of religion within society and the meaning-making that social actors ascribe to it. Similarly, for Geertz (2005) religions are conceptualised as symbolic structures from which actors explain their physical, mental, social, and emotional realities. A religious tradition can therefore be understood as one repertoire for meaning-making, amongst others, from which actors interpret and assign meaning to the social world (Mellor & Shilling, 2014, Chapter 1). Thus, the present study takes religious meaning to be 'constructed, attributed, and challenged' by individuals within their specific contexts (Beckford, 2003, p. 16).

### 4.1.1: Lived Religion

Within this social constructivist account of religion, the notion of 'lived religion' was influential in conceptualising the focus of study. As Ammerman (2016, p. 91) summarises, a lived religion approach turns our attention to the 'embodied, discursive, and material dimensions of life where sacred things are being produced, encountered, and shared'. In doing so, lived religion looks for religion not in theology or beliefs, but in the narratives, practices, and the body, that lie at the heart of everyday experience (Ammerman, 2014; McGuire, 2007, 2008). Religion is 'made real' by agents' desires to attend to their spiritual lives in the everyday (McGuire, 2008, p. 98). Accordingly, McGuire (2008, p. 98) identifies lived religion's account of the religious as:

> … constituted by the practices people use to remember, share, enact, adapt,
> create and combine the stories out of which they live… [brought] into being
> through the often-mundane practices people use to transform these meaningful
> interpretations into everyday action.

From this ontological foundation, religious traditions are known through discourses as repertoires of meaning-making, from amongst others, which are available to actors in their social contexts. These repertoires are distinct because they frame the world within 'other-worldly orientations, codified within systems of orthodoxy and orthopraxy' (Mellor & Shilling, 2014, p. 12). But they become

entwined with other, 'this-worldly' repertoires in order to make them meaningfully relevant to the contexts in which individuals are acting (Ammerman, 2014; McGuire, 2008, p. 25). Epistemologically, religions become (re)produced and known intersubjectively between actors' shared experiences of religion and the discourses produced from these religious repertoires (McGuire, 2008, p. 12). The recognition of different, but entwined, other-worldly and this-worldly repertoires of meaning is significant to the present study because, as Mogra (2010, 2013, 2014) has drawn attention to, it captures the intersections between the various meaning-making repertoires available to the participants in their school contexts.

Considering religious identities in this way privileges the active, creative, and reflexive agency that people employ to craft their identities, which is the central concern of the research questions. Driven by a desire to bring the sacred into the everyday, McGuire (2008, p. 25) demonstrates that religious individuals 'eclectically choose their own devotional options from a large repertoire of locally acceptable practices'. These choices are not founded on (theo)logical consistency but rather a practical logic: that 'it needs to make sense in one's everyday life, and it needs to be effective, to "work", in the sense of accomplishing some desired end' (2008, p. 15). This desired end, for McGuire (2008, p. 18), is the individuals desire to 'attend to the spiritual in their everyday lives'. Such pragmatic negotiation rests on an awareness of the diverse possible ways of being within a given context, and the reflexive agency to choose the best way of achieving these desires (see also Archer, 2012). Religious identities are therefore made of the reflexive, pragmatic choices people make from within the various repertoires of meaning-making available to them, and their negotiation between these, in order to attend to the sacred and profane in their everyday lives. As I have noted, these reflective choices were at the heart of the participants' identity work in Gilliat-Ray et. al.'s (2013), Essers and Benschop's (2009), and Cadge and Konieczny's (2014) studies, as well as in Mogra's (2014) account of the Muslimah.

Moreover, with its commitment to producing highly contextual analyses, lived religion has legitimised the search for religion in sites and forms that have otherwise been overlooked (Ammerman, 2014; Bender et al., 2013). This recognition 'de-centres' the field's focus from "official" sites of religion: religious elites, religious organisations, and religious congregations, to religion 'at the edges': the laity, the workplace, and the quotidian (Bender et al., 2013). With this emphasis on creativity and eclecticism, it also has disrupted "official" repertoires of religion, including scholarly understandings, by broadening the phenomena of what constitutes "being religious" (McGuire, 2008, Chapter 2). As I have discussed, these scholars have drawn attention to the 'secular' workplace as a particularly important context for the study of religion, given its centrality in many people's everyday lives (Cadge & Konieczny, 2014, p. 9). The tensions encountered in these spaces encourage

religious individuals' use of agency to creatively and practically piece together the 'bricolage of meanings' available to them in the workplace, in their attempt to construct coherent identities within 'secular' organisations (Cadge & Konieczny, 2014, p. 3). The capacity to see religion in different places and manifestations is extremely relevant for the current study. As my research questions sought to explore the relationship between religious and professional identity attributes, the realities of the workplace - in this case schools – needed to be prominent within the analysis.

This led to the adoption of a bricologic notion of religious identity. Bricolage denotes the process of fabricating, tinkering, and constructing the 'DIY self', in which individuals creatively and eclectically pastiche various repertoires of meaning together, typically with an element of pragmatism, toward acting in accordance with a given context (Altglas, 2014a, p. 474). Hervieu-Léger (1998) argues that the 'right to bricolage' is the hallmark of contemporary religious identities. She (1998, p. 215, italics in Hervieu-Léger) writes that 'in this context, individuals are led to *produce for themselves* (if they produce at all) their relationship to the believing lineage from which they take their identity'. This authority gives individuals the capacity to 'play with the codes' of religious repertoires of meaning, using and reusing them in diverse ways to construct their religious selves (1998, p. 217). The notion of Muslim teachers, and specifically RE teachers, as bricoleurs has been evoked in the literature review to varying degrees, to illustrate the fluidity, pragmatism, and creativity that these individuals expressed in the construction of their workplace identities. As such, bricolage was a fruitful concept for considering identity in my exploration of the main research questions.

### 4.1.2: Everyday Lived Islam

The present study conceptualised Muslims primarily as social actors who employ Islam as a repertoire of meaning-making in their everyday contexts, in conjunction with other repertoires of meaning-making, and accordingly, desire to attend to these spiritual needs in their everyday lives in conjunction with goals reflecting their other, contextually-dependent social positions.

This conceptualisation is strongly influenced by the scholarship of 'everyday lived Islam'. Everyday lived Islam is becoming increasingly prominent in the study of Islam and Muslims (Liebelt & Werbner, 2018). Scholars have turned to this approach as a way to reconceptualise Muslim identities firmly within their social contexts (Dessing et al., 2016b). As Jeldtoft and Nielsen (2011, p. 1114) state, this approach focuses on how 'Muslims… locate themselves in relation to the organized expressions of the religion and/or how they relate to and live out their religion in other aspects of life'. This has provided new analytical concepts in which to articulate Muslim identities beyond the official repertoire of beliefs and practices akin to the aims of lived religion. Of particular significance is Jeldtoft's (2011) work with 'non-organised' Muslims in European contexts, in which the participants' narratives disrupted wider "official" religious and scholarly discourses through their

'non-practice', pragmatic re-configuration of Islam, and sense of being a Muslim as an 'internalized value system'. Her (2011) work challenges official representations of Muslims by highlighting their pragmatic capacity to engage their faith with their various modern Western contexts. In this way, everyday lived Islam shares the theoretical commitments of lived religion by considering how Islam is 'made real' in the narratives and practices Muslims are creating in these Western, 'secular' contexts (2011, p. 1141). Similarly, Schielke (2010) and Fadil and Fernando (2015) consider how such identity work is a natural part of Muslims' engagement with the contemporary world, stressing how difficult the idealised 'pious Muslim subject' is to sustain. In my project, everyday lived Islam has opened up the conceptual possibilities of how the participants could "be Muslim" in their role as non-confessional RE teachers beyond this official repertoire, rectifying a significant analytical critique in the literature so far.

However, there are two significant critiques of everyday lived Islam that I contend with by adopting this approach. The first is Hirschkind's (2014) claim that the notion of 'everyday Islam' represents an 'exemplary' neo-Orientalist project, serving to highlight the alterity of Muslims in contrast to the 'secular' norm of the 'everyday'. Because the 'everyday' is synonymous with the 'secular', everyday lived Islam is seen to valorise the 'normative standpoint of 'secular' modernity' within its theoretical purview (2014). Consequently, within these studies Muslims are essentially 'othered' by this 'secular' commitment: either emphasising their alterity in relation to the norms of the everyday, or subject to a quasi-assimilationist 'sameness' discourse by seeking to highlight their similarities (Fadil & Fernando, 2015, p. 82). This critique raised important questions about the purpose of my study and the representation of the participants. In the findings and discussion chapters, I have attempted to mitigate this by attempting to portray "both sides", by focussing on their capacity to achieve both of their identity-attributes, and to incorporate and resist the dominant 'secular' professional frameworks within which they are situated. Doing so locates their representation within their agentic goals and desires that underpin their identity work, as opposed to my desires as researcher to represent them in a specific way.

There are two counter-points that I wish to raise in response to the neo-Orientalist critique and the resultant representation of the participants in the present study. Firstly, I agree with Liebelt and Werbner (2018, p. 5) that this critique misapprehends the 'everyday' as 'secular'. Rather, it is a site of empirical investigation of 'that which is familiar, taken-for-granted, naturalised, commonsensical, unreflective, embodied… marked by unmarked inconsistencies and even contradictions of belief and practice' (2018, p. 5). They (2018, pp. 5-6) rightly identify that the notion of 'everyday' is not binary, but rather it could be where the 'everyday' is constituted by Islamic morality and piety. But given the context of the present study: British secondary schools, the 'everyday' – as the context – is going to

be normatively 'secular' because it is the context in which the participants are operating within. This encapsulates the kind of theoretical and contextual pragmatism that underpins the lived religion approach more widely.

Secondly, I would charge Hirschkind (2014) with religifying Muslims within this critique by seemingly insisting that Muslims have no other agentic desires in relation to their positions in their social contexts. In contrast, Fadil and Fernando (2015, p. 83) propose that the analytical commitment of such studies should be to 'making legible and viable the imaginaries, hopes, and aspirations that guide the everyday conduct of people… without simply rendering them as similar to "us"', attending to these multifarious agentic desires'. This is precisely my commitment in the present study: to explore how the participants wanted to be both good Muslims and good RE teachers, and so how they engaged with, incorporated, and challenged the 'secular everyday' in their school contexts.

A more problematic critique concerns the potential for everyday lived Islam to overstate the fluidity and eclecticism in accounts of the construction of Muslim identities. Bricologic approaches to identity have traditionally focussed on these dynamics within the theoretical context of postmodern selfhood, lending itself toward this emphasis (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, pp. 11-15). However, within the scholarship surrounding British Muslim identity there has been concern that this focus on eclecticism misses the limitations of identity construction that Muslims experience (DeHanas, 2015; Jacobson, 1998; McLoughlin, 2007; Mellor & Shilling, 2014, p. 147). For example, Jacobson (1998, p. 137), in her study of British Pakistani youth, writes that:

> It seems vitally important to recognise that there are certain limits to the extent to
> which individuals can redefine themselves and the groups to which they belong; or that,
> at least, even theoretically it is possible to challenge in countless ways such limits, they
> are very often accepted and hence, in practice, exist.

This caution surrounding the unfettered fluidity of postmodern Muslim identities has led scholars to seek a return to certain 'cores' of Islam. McLoughlin (2007) has argued that there should be a return to the text, whilst DeHanas (2015) argues for an 'elastic orthodoxy' in which accepted ways of being Muslim are applied to new contexts. Elsewhere, there has been a renewed focus on the impact of national and global Islamic organisations and movements as the locus of British Muslim identity formation (Elshayyal, 2018; Hamid, 2016). Mahmood (2005) also reminds us that being 'traditionally' Muslim is also a reflective choice.

However, I am wary of these responses as they tend to draw analyses into notions of a 'fixed' or 'central' Muslim self that extends into the social, rather than beginning with Muslims as social actors

first that are 'making sense' of their faith in, and with, the plural social positions they occupy. Scholars have also been critical of this essentialising tendency in sociological approaches to Muslims (Ahmed, 2016; Asad, 1986, 1993; Bectovic, 2011; El-Zein, 1977; Marranci, 2008; Varisco, 2005), and resultant conceptualisations of Islam as transhistorical and transcultural (Asad, 1993, pp. 28-29). The notion of 'cores' also sits uncomfortably within lived religion and everyday lived Islam, as approaches which seek to disrupt these "official" representations by highlighting the socially constructed, embodied, and contextually dependent nature of religious phenomena.

I propose that Altglas' (2014a, 2014b) notion of bricolage provides a way of attending to these critiques. Similarly recognising the 'overstatement' of creativity and eclecticism in the formation of religious bricolage, Altglas (2014b, p. 8) contends that such accounts deny the structuring power of religion. Being religious involves conformity with its repertoire of meaning-making, and this necessarily constrains the bricologic choices individuals can make, particularly in relation to their contemporary societal contexts (Altglas, 2014b, p. 6). Thus, Altglas (2014a) suggests that revendicating the notion of coherence can revitalise these constraints in accounts of the construction of religious bricolage. She (2014a, p. 490) reminds us that:

> Social actors do not appropriate anything and are not indifferent to the origins and
> meaning of the resources they appropriate. Their bricolage actually entails selective
> (and uncomfortable) processes of negotiation and interpretations with what is
> appropriated.

Coherence adds directionality and a sense of goal-orientated agency to construction of religious identity, orientated to the norms and values of the repertoires of meaning-making to which religious believers are committed (2014a, p. 486). Altglas (2014a, p. 486) highlights that in the case of the supposedly eclectic Hindu, Buddhist, Kabbalistic, Shamanic and Sufi teachings the quest to find 'inner-worldly realisation of the self' is a homogenous imperative, and this led individuals to constantly 'seek practical methods for personal growth'. Thus, this quest 'reflects social pressures upon individuals for permanent self-actualisation and, more largely, the increasing normalisation of the self' toward this goal (2014a, p. 486). Similarly, by conceptualising Islam as the 'total social sacred', Mellor and Shilling (2014, pp. 146-147) consider how Muslims are orientated toward crafting an Islamic habitus[10] from within the potentialities of their social contexts. The importance of coherence has also been alluded to in the previous literature in the continuing presence of faith in Muslim teachers' construction of

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[10] For Mellor and Shilling (2014, p. 16), drawing on Bourdieu (1977), habitus concerns 'the development of general orientations and dispositions', here towards Islam.

their identity both 'spiritually' and in terms of specific practices (Basit et al., 2007; Benn, 2003; Benn et al., 2011; Mogra, 2010, 2013). The Muslimah in Mogra's (2014, p. 20) work touches upon coherence in this way:

> There seems to be a framework, which she has created to use for social activities in the wider community, and she evidently operates within the boundaries of this framework; and, in so doing she is confronting various pressures.

Yet, how she constructs this framework or what pressures she confronts is not explored further.

Altglas (2014a, p. 490) provides a way of doing so by situating coherence at the centre of bricolage, uncovering underlying intersecting processes and logics that limit what resources *can* be appropriated and how they can be held together. There are 'pre-constraints of meaning' that limit the extent to which resources can be hermeneutically renegotiated and interpreted (2014a, p. 487). 'Pre-existing sociocultural logics' organise bricolage according to cultural and social 'norms, meanings and intents' (2014a, p. 488). Existing asymmetric power-relations limit what can be appropriated in a bricolage by preventing and enforcing certain ways of being, notably through the effects of 'race', gender, and class (Altglas, 2014a, pp. 487-488). As such, these processes and logics structure coherent bricolage, limiting eclecticism in its construction.

However, because bricolage is socially constructed within specific contexts, actors can be forced to incorporate various resources into their bricolage, which may not necessarily cohere with their existing aspects of identity. Altglas (2014b, p. 136) writes of how the de-contextualisation of exotic religious resources that those in her study engaged with prompted 'intense, conflicted re-writing of religious identity'. This reflects how the blending of repertoires of meaning-making into a single bricolage can bring together resources that may not obviously fit together coherently (Altglas, 2014b, p. 136). In the case of Muslim RE teachers, this can be understood as potential tensions between the resources of their 'secular' professional framework and the framework of their Islamic tradition.

Thus, the notion of coherence allows for the analytical possibility of tensions and contradictions between resources that must be appropriated to be successful in a chosen profession, and aspects of religious commitment. Altglas (2014b, p. 118) writes that 'ambivalence and contradiction' between these resources can evoke feelings of 'resistance, rejection, and transgression' because they compromise this coherence. Similarly, in the Literature Review I have noted the feeling of compromise of their Muslim identity that some Muslim teachers felt in their work (Benn, 2003;

Sanjakdar, 2013; Scott-Baumann, 2003), but how the 'race' trajectory could not fully articulate these tensions nor suggest how they could be managed.

The limitations of coherence also help articulate the ontological and epistemological seriousness of tensions encountered by these Muslim RE teachers, as aspects of reflexive identity construction that must be negotiated carefully. For Altglas (2014a, p. 481), drawing on Bastide (1970) and Mary (1994), the tensions and contradictions that these limitations present are precisely what prompt actors to resist or uphold dominant structures, or synthesise and create new religious identities. Moreover, Hadfield and Hayes (1993, p. 169) highlight that contradictions can also simply be 'maintained... existing in different forms or at different levels'. In this way, coherence can be understood as an agentic desire that underpins an actor's bricolage construction. They aim to achieve coherence, as far as possible, between the resources that are incorporated into their bricolage (Altglas, 2014a, p. 490). This may be through resistance, acceptance, synthesis, or maintenance of such tensions. Therefore, reflections on the concept of coherence and its incorporation into this study's bricologic notion of Muslim identity not only serves to address critiques of lived religion's potential to overstate eclecticism in the formation of religious identity, but also facilitates the conceptualisation of 'tensions' themselves, in a way that can usefully support analysis relating to the third research question.

### 4.1.3: Narrative Teacher Identity

In the Literature Review I argued that the general lack of engagement with teacher identity has conceptually obscured the analysis of Muslim teachers, denying their capacity to have values and goals as teachers, as well as Muslims. In contrast, in Gilliat-Ray et. al.'s (2013) work with Muslim chaplains the authors establish both the professional conceptualisation of chaplaincy, and the notion of chaplaincy from within the Islamic tradition, to explore the relationship between the two. Following their example, there is a need to establish what was meant by teacher identity in the present study.

In the previous chapter, I explicated a narrative approach to teacher identity. This approach was consonant with the life history methodologies commonly employed in the wider literature. Accordingly, the present study employed a narrative teacher identity approach to conceptualising the RE teacher, constructed from the 'stories' that the participants lived by, about their 'personal practical knowledge' and 'professional knowledge landscape' (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Key conceptual features were the ecological nature of teacher agency, achieved in relation to their wider professional and policy discourses and their specific school contexts (Priestley et al., 2015), along with tensions surrounding the body and performativity (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). Additionally, my analysis of the RE teacher literature revealed key features of its construction.

Although subject to academic critique, the notion of the 'objective, neutral RE teacher' seems to be the prevailing discourse of RE teacher professionalism, which centres on the capacity to conceal one's faith in the classroom (Everington, 2016; Franken & Loobuyck, 2017; Jackson & Everington, 2017). However, Freathy et al. (2017) and Everington (2014, 2015) have advocated bricologic approaches to the construction of the RE teacher, reflecting the capacity of RE teachers to shape their own pedagogy. Elsewhere, Mogra (2009, 2014) presents accounts of Muslim teachers that also demonstrate creativity, fluidity, and sophistication in their identity work. Yet, the majority of the literature continues to express the primacy of the Muslim identity-attribute in this construction.

Accordingly, from this literature the notion of the 'Muslim RE teacher' was taken forward as the primary unit of study. Inspired by the prevalent assumption of the primacy of the Muslim identity-attribute in Muslim's identity construction within education, this label conveyed that the participants had a core identity that was Muslim, which underpinned their role as neutral, non-confessional RE teachers. This is important to state because, as I discuss in Chapter 5, this initial conceptualisation was heavily contested by the participants.

## 4.2 Methodology

Having established the research questions and underlying theoretical framework, I now proceed to outline the methodological framework of the study. Methodological selection should reflect the research focus and the underlying theoretical assumptions of the study (May, 2011, pp. 26-27). My focus on the identity of a specific group of actors in a particular structure leads me to adopt an exploratory case study approach (Yin, 2012). Case studies are suitable when 'empirical inquiry must examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 1981, p. 98). Exploratory case studies are often conducted 'prior to the final definition of study', which allows the case study to emerge from the data (Yin, 2012, p. 29). Here the case is defined by 'the type of individuals… from whom information might be obtained' (Yin, 1981, p. 103). 'Muslim RE teachers' are such a case, representing the unique intersection between Islam (more appropriately Muslimness) and the professional knowledge landscape of teaching, situated within their school contexts. As such, the findings reflect 'Muslim RE teachers' as a specific case of Muslim actor, contributing to the wider discussion of British Muslim identity akin to Gilliat-Ray et. al.'s (2013) discussion of Muslim chaplains as a 'new category of religious actor'.

Case study research does not preclude the use of any methodological paradigm or methods (Yin, 2012). The participants' lived experience led me to P. Atkinson's (2017) notion of 'granular ethnography', which informed the methodological framework. He (2017, p. 11) describes this as:

> It traces the grain of everyday life. The grain is given by the naturally occurring forms of social order and cultural forms. The ethnography is, therefore, faithful to the multiple ways in which everyday life is ordered and enacted. It reflects conventions and codes of culture. It documents just how social actors achieve and perform what they do.

'Granular ethnography' captures the key aspects of this study. It brings a methodological emphasis to capturing an individual's goal-orientated agency and how this is achieved in practice, that is at the centre of my theoretical framework. But this framework also recognises that practice is bound by 'convention and codes' (P. Atkinson, 2017, p. 12). 'Granular ethnography' therefore seeks to produce 'thick' descriptions that provide 'detailed and sustained analyses of how social life is actually enacted' (P. Atkinson, 2017, p. 12). Acknowledgement of these limitations are integral to the account of bricologic identity I have discussed. Thus, the use of 'granular ethnography' is consistent with the underlying theoretical framework and exploratory case study approach, enabling the exploration of the ways in which these participants constructed and experienced their faith in their school contexts.

The need to generate 'thick' descriptions led me to adopt a solely qualitative research design. Qualitative methods are suited to producing 'thick' descriptions because they generate understanding not from 'grand' deductive theories but from 'locally, temporally and situationally limited narratives' (Flick, 2009, p. 12). The researcher becomes the research instrument, penetrating into this context, interpreting and co-constructing the data to produce this understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 29). In contrast, quantitative studies rely on 'more remote, inferential empirical materials' from which to generate typically wider, statistical analyses focussed on trends and patterns (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 10). By casting a wide gaze, the researcher is distanced from the world they are studying and the richness of individuals experience is reduced to a single data point (Bryman, 2012, p. 179). Moreover, the lack of data pertaining to the number of Muslim RE teachers currently working in British secondary state schools would prevent any accurate measure of a reasonable quantitative sample, which is vital to its perceived degree of validity. Thus, it was deemed that quantitative methods were wholly unsuitable to the present study, even in a mixed methods capacity.

### 4.2.1 Methods

The study employed two qualitative methods to generate data: semi-structured interviews and participant shadowing. Qualitative research utilises a diverse array of interpretive data collection methods and analytical tools in order to generate and theoretically (re)articulate the 'thick' descriptions and narratives elicited with the participants (P. Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003, p. 15). Amongst these, participant observation and interviews have been held as the 'gold standard' of qualitative research methods (P. Atkinson et al., 2003, p. 113). P. Atkinson et al. (2003, p. 113) warn that this is not because interviews and participant observation reveal a distinction between 'word and deed', but rather they both facilitate 'analysis of the local realisation of generic social processes' by generating differently contextualised data.

*Semi-Structured Interviews*

The primary method of data collection for the project was 21 semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1 - Interview Schedule), conducted between May 2016 and September 2017. Through the generation of narratives, interviews shed light on the meaning-making processes that individuals engage in (May, 2011). Within ethnographic studies, the use of interviews allows the researcher to 'gain access to the interior world of the private and personal' to explore these personal meaning-making processes (P. Atkinson et al., 2003, p. 133). In educational research, interviews elicit the meanings individuals ascribed to their experience of education (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Accessing this 'internal world' was vital to this research because the research questions sought to access the participants' experience of RE as Muslims working within a 'secular' educational context.

Despite the traditionally narrative and open style of ethnographic interviews, and the prevalence of life history interviews within studies of Muslim teachers so far, a semi-structured interview style was chosen. The semi-structured interview is where 'questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is freer to probe beyond the answers prejudicial to the aims of standardisation and comparability' (May, 2011, p. 134). This style was preferred for several reasons. Although semi-structured interviews are framed by a series of set questions, it offers the freedom to elicit narratives and elaborate on themes as they emerge (May, 2011, p. 136). I felt that this struck a good balance between my desire to investigate specific avenues of inquiry as raised by the literature but also provided space for the participants to shape the interview as they saw fit. The interview schedule was continually refined during the research process in response to themes emerging from the data, and a powerful addition to this process was to finish the interview by asking participants if they wanted to include a question in the interview, or if they wanted to ask other participants questions through the study (see Appendix 1 - Interview Schedule, question 32). This afforded the participants power in the research process, allowing them to direct the future avenue of study, and

raised significant areas of inquiry that were later pursued. Specifically, the eschatological tensions that participants felt around certain aspects of their job, discussed in Chapter 7, was an avenue of inquiry that was largely absent from the literature but emerged as a significant theme. Also, the specifically quotidian focus of this study sat uncomfortably with the life story interview's grand scope and attention to the 'most important aspects' of participants' lives (R. Atkinson, 1998, p. 8).

A considerable part of the interview design also reflected practical considerations. These considerations were vital given how notoriously busy teachers are, that the impact of research on participants is an ethical concern, and the potentially sensitive nature of the research. Hence, an extensive interview procedure was a potentially significant barrier to the research process. Early in the research design it was decided that the needs of the participants would be a primary concern in how the interviews were conducted, and this commitment also influenced the selection of semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews afforded more practical flexibility than in-depth ethnographic or life history interviews. Whereas these interviews are typically time intensive for both parties, typically taking between three to four hours (R. Atkinson, 1998), the interview schedule was created with an anticipated time of one hour, although the interviews tended toward two hours in length. This greatly facilitated the interview process by allowing me to slot in to the participants' working schedules, as I was able to meet with them during the day or after work. The interview sites were similarly flexible. Face-to-face interviewing was preferred as this is more personal and was deemed important given the sensitive nature of inquiry. It also facilitated rapport-building and an ability to scope potentially suitable locations for the shadowing. I also desired to interview the participants in their school contexts to aid the elicitation of narratives about their work (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002), but staff rooms were eschewed because the social nature of these work areas could compromise the confidential and sensitive nature of this research, as well as the sound quality of recordings. These different styles and sites were noted as part of the data collection (see Appendix 2 – Sample Data).

In practice, most of the participants opted to see me outside of work because this was easier to facilitate in terms of their time management and access. Overall 15 of the 21 interviews were conducted face-to-face, and eight of these interviews took place in the participants' schools, either in their classrooms or in specific interview rooms. Other sites of interviews were: at a participant's local mosque, two coffee shops, two library meeting rooms, and two in their homes. These were all

sites in which social workplace pressures would not affect the interview, and, apart from the cafes, the sound quality.[11]

Two interviews were conducted over Skype, which created the illusion of the face-to-face interview (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). These took place in front of the participants' home computers, outside of their working day.

Where possible telephone conversations were avoided, but a small number of telephone interviews (four) were conducted. As has been well documented, telephone interviews tend to be eschewed in qualitative research because of the perception that they elicit worse data, by virtue of being prone to disruption, missing vital visual clues, and tend to be shorter (something that is overcome through the use of Skype) (Novick, 2008, pp. 394-396). Given the sensitivities of this research, I thought that face-to-face was necessary in order to build rapport and trust with the participant, which telephone interviews lack. However, despite the literature's and my own concerns around telephone interviewing, it did elicit extremely valuable data (particularly in the pilot interviews) and allowed me to reach a much larger area of potential participants whilst I was travelling conducting other interviews. Participants seemed to remain very open about their experiences, and I did not experience any disruption or found that these interviews were shorter than other interviews. Whilst these interviews did somewhat miss the visual and contextual data that I gathered from meeting the participants, especially in their school settings, I do not feel that this was as detrimental to the data as suggested. It could be that, as Novick (2008) claims, there may be an undue bias against telephone interviews in the literature, and that they have an important place given the ease and geographical scope that this style of interviews allows.

All the interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone, and none of the participants declined consent for the recordings, though there was a single instance of 'off-the-record' discussion lasting for a couple of minutes. I made notes during the interview on the Interview Schedule Proforma (see Appendix 1 - Interview Schedule), mainly of further prompts and key incidents, and wrote additional reflections within two hours of completing the interview. All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim: 17 by me and four by a reputable online transcription service which were reviewed by myself. The interview transcripts were left as 'messy' as possible, leaving in false starts, long pauses, "um"s "ahh"s and "like"s, and kept the colloquialisms of the participants. This was important because these verbal cues signalled potentially uncomfortable or challenging moments in the interview for the participants, along with the local mannerisms that the participants employed to express themselves.

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[11] It is for this reason why there is no quoted data from Mr Kossar in the findings. Due to the noise the recording was too difficult to transcribe reliably, so I have had to rely on my notes taken during the interview.

Overall, this led to the generation of approximately 50 hours of interview data, with the average interview lasting around 1 hour 45 minutes, that formed the primary data set of the study from 21 participants. Pekkanen and Bleich (2015) suggest stating the "response rate" for the use of data collection methods as a measure of success for the interview procedure. Although the idea of an actual response rate is arbitrary (given, for example, the number who may have passed on the online recruitment), there seemed to be a remarkably high participation rate from those initially contacted to interview: approximately 25 people were contacted with 21 taking part. The only reason given for non-participation being too busy to take part in research. I tentatively suggest that the strong success of the recruitment for this stage of the research was due to the practical flexibility in which I approached the interview procedure, keeping the needs of the participants first and foremost, and the perception I have, from the interviews, that the participants were genuinely interested in the research I was conducting. I raise this as an important consideration for those wishing to conduct similar research with teachers in the future.

### Participant Shadowing

To enrich the interview data, an element of participant observation was incorporated into the research design. As Gilliat-Ray (2010a) writes, 'being there' allows the researcher to 'share the experiences' with their participants, eliciting data of a qualitatively different kind. These observations were used to generate data about how the participants "did" their identity-work in the moment, within the social milieu of their school contexts. A vital part of 'granular ethnography' is the focus on how people actually perform the tasks and actions that they discuss. Participant observation facilitates this kind of description by allowing the researcher to experience the situations and interactions of the participants within their 'social scenes' (May, 2011, p. 166), generating contextually observed narrative data in symmetry with the narrative data of social action garnered through interviews (P. Atkinson et al., 2003, p. 108). Moreover, there has been little to no observation of Muslim teachers within their school contexts. As such, the inclusion of an observational element to the study was important to enriching the account of the 'everyday' experiences of these individuals.

The kind of participant observation used within a project differs according to its underlying theoretical and methodological principles (May, 2011, p. 168). This study employed a 'participant shadowing' method of participant observation. Shadowing has been defined as ''observation on the move', as the researcher follows a target participant as they go about their everyday work (Czarniawska, 2014, p. 43). It is similarly underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology and lends itself to a case study approach by its focus on the understanding that is developed through social practice within specific contexts (Bøe, Hognestad, & Waniganayake, 2016, p. 4). It is unique,

however, in its focus on a single actor operating in this context, as opposed to accounts of groups or the context itself, typical of ethnographies (Gilliat-Ray, 2011, p. 470). Thus, shadowing can be used to elicit the understanding and experiences of the workplace or organisation from the point of view of this single actor (McDonald, 2005; McDonald & Simpson, 2014).

Furthermore, the use of 'shadowing' as a research method has been closely associated with educational research, with Wolcott's (1973) ethnography of a headteacher being an exemplar. The notion of shadowing is firmly embedded within the lexicon of teaching, with shadowing being the primary method of onsite training during ITT and a common CPD practice and was therefore something that the participants in this study, and their schools, seemed to understand and be amenable to. Thus, 'participant shadowing' exemplified many of the foci within this study by keeping the participants at the centre of the gaze in the field.

However, as Gill, Barbour, and Dean (2014) warn, the intensity of shadowing can be challenging to both participants and the researcher. Participants may feel uneasy due to the intimate nature of shadowing and the fear of judgement about their working practice (2014, pp. 71-72). There are also practical worries surrounding impact on their working practice, time commitment, and concerns with having to manage the researcher during the day (2014, p. 74). These concerns were expressed by many of the participants when shadowing was initially broached, and in part limited the resultant shadowing sample and length of time spent with the participants. It also prompted considerable reflection on my presence in the field.

Three participant shadows were conducted over the course of the research, each with a single participant in a different school context. Participants for shadowing were selected after they had been interviewed and were identified as an important case within the emerging analysis of the data, representing different orientations to their construction as Muslim RE teachers (see Chapter 5). Below I provide a brief outline of the shadowing.

*Mrs Khan, North Academy*

Mrs Khan was one of the only participants who identified herself as a 'Muslim RE teacher'. In the interview she explained that she made explicit reference to her own faith in her teaching practice. This led to her selection as an interesting 'case' for shadowing.

The research site was North Academy. This was a large academy in the North West of England that had a predominantly Muslim pupil population. I shadowed Mrs Khan for a total of 12 days over five weeks during the Spring term. This meant that many of the lessons were building up to the Summer exams, and the prevalence of "revision lessons" provided a picture of pupils' learning throughout the

year and so allowed me to observe a wide range of topics. Mrs Khan had opted to teach Christianity and Islam as her chosen religions for GCSE. This added an interesting dynamic, allowing me to see how she taught about "her own religion" and another.

*Miss Aziz, South School*

Like most of the participants, Miss Aziz described herself as an 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim'. Her biography, identity-work, and her experiences reflected many of the participants in the study. She was chosen as a research case due to her capacity to reflect the general experience of many of the participants.

I shadowed Miss Aziz for a total of ten days over four weeks during the Summer term. South School was a large, ethnically diverse school in the South East of England. Miss Aziz had also opted to teach Christianity and Islam as the focus of GCSE study. This period of shadowing coincided with Ramadan and provided a fascinating opportunity to view how she managed fasting and prayer with the physically demanding work of teaching.

*Mr Jones, Forest Grammar*

As a white convert to Islam, Mr Jones' experience was markedly different from the other participants in the study. Specifically, he was able to "hide" his Muslim identity as he was not visibly Muslim. His experience therefore reflected a new perspective on the notions of 'race' and performativity within the study.

I only shadowed Mr Jones for two days as there were numerous issues of ethics and access. Mr Jones was particularly concerned about being 'outed' but was also keen to be involved with the research. This led to deciding on a 'short visit'. Still, the brief shadow was invaluable in providing a new perspective by exploring how Muslim identities can be "hidden" in the workplace, inflecting the narratives of the other participants.

This supplementary shadowing data represents 24 days of observation conducted over ten weeks during the Spring and Summer terms of 2017. Participants were shadowed for two or three days a week to help manage the volume of data that was produced. This was advised by Prof. Gilliat-Ray from her experience of shadowing Muslim chaplains (see Gilliat-Ray, 2011). Observations were recorded in a fieldwork journal and were then transcribed during the evening whilst my memory of events was fresh. During the fieldwork I developed a practice of 'double-page noting' with one side capturing descriptions of events and the other my analytical reflections, much like the practice of Gill et al. (2014, p. 81). Although my descriptions are similarly interpreted, the physical gap on the page provided a reflective space which allowed me to further consider my observations, and my

positionality in terms of the intuitive analysis I was making. These intuitive notes were included in the fieldnote transcriptions in the form of comments on the document (see Appendix 3 – Transcribed Fieldnote Sample).

Although the shadowing could not be considered substantive or "truly" ethnographic (Wolcott, 1994), I believe it has been successful in enriching the primary data gathered through interviews. The shadowing sets the present study apart from the wider literature, which currently lacks this kind of observational element, providing a glimpse, an albeit fleeting, at the everyday empirical realities of Muslim RE teachers.

### 4.2.2 Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed in the present study. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to make sense of the data by drawing out emerging themes and patterns (Boyatzis, 1998). This process involves 'encoding' the data into emerging themes and patterns, developed from both the data and the wider literature that has been consulted, to describe the phenomena under investigation (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Although I have emphasised the importance of narrative in exploring notions of religious and teacher identity in the Literature Review and Methodology, a narrative analysis itself was eschewed in order to focus on these emerging themes and patterns. However, I have prioritised the narratives of the participants in this thematic analysis, in keeping with the 'lived religions' approach that guides the overall theoretical and methodological focus.

The study employed a 'directed coding process' deduced from the initial concepts from the literature review (Boyatzis, 1998), and the research questions (see Appendix 4 – Nvivo Codes). This initially comprised of three broad codes: *RACE*, *FAITH*, and *RE TEACHER*, reflecting the major theoretical strands in the literature, as well as codes for biographical data (*BIOGRAPHY*) and methodological concerns (*METHODOLOGICAL*). These codes were then progressively developed and refined throughout the project by consistently grounding the codes in the data, resulting in more detailed sub-codes within the broader, conceptually directed codes (Boyatzis, 1998, pp. 7-9). The relationships between codes then led to further analysis and the creation of a new series of codes. In the present study, the codes *MUSLIM RE TEACHER* and *TENSIONS* emerged from the analysis and development of cross-code relationships.

In the analysis the two different kinds of data were brought together through a complementary understanding of triangulation (Hammersley, 2008). In contrast to seeking validation between methods, complementary triangulation provides 'different pictures of this object that might not be useful to validate each other but that might yield a fuller and more complete picture of the phenomenon concerned if brought together' (Erzberger and Kelle, 2003 in Hammersley, 2008, p. 6).

The use of shadowing to enrich the interview data provided a moment-by-moment perspective on the experiences of the participants, which was particularly relevant to elucidating the reflexive practices they had developed over the course of their teaching careers (Gilliat-Ray, 2011). Accordingly, the analysis involved the constant iteration between the literature, interview data, and the shadowing data, to re-interpret and refine my interpretations (Hammersley, 2008, pp. 10-11).

The analysis began with periods of reflection within a couple of hours after the interviews and days of shadowing. This mainly involved noting intuitive emerging themes and points of commonality between participants' accounts. The interviews and fieldnotes were then transcribed and uploaded into NVivo 10 to manage the formal coding procedure discussed above. This analysis was ongoing throughout the data collection process, redefining and refining the codes and lines of inquiry pursued in the interviews. At the beginning of the formal analysis phase of the study, the data was then reviewed in terms of the codes that had been developed, and a specific analytical focus was chosen to present in this thesis.

### 4.2.3 Research Design
*Sampling*
Cohen et al. (2000, p. 92) identify four key factors to determine the sampling strategy:

1. sample size
2. representativeness and parameters
3. access
4. overall sampling strategy and recruitment

The sampling strategy should reflect the research aims, methodology, and also the practical suitability of the proposed sample and limitations of available data.

The total sample size numbered 21 participants. Although there is no pre-set sample size for a qualitative PhD study, it is suggested that a number between 25 to 30 participants is a "normal" sample size for an interview-based qualitative research project (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Dworkin, 2012). However, a slightly smaller sample size (20 – 25) was chosen because the study also sought to carry out a small number of participant shadows alongside the conduction of interviews, which would generate a substantial and different amount of data to manage. So, the smaller overall sample size was deemed more manageable in relation to the proposed methods. Although there was no source of information as to the total number of Muslim RE teachers in Britain at the time of my study, and so no way of ascertaining how representative my sample is (as is typically the case in qualitative research), I am nonetheless aware that the statistical generalisability of this study is limited (Seale, 1999). Yet, I maintain that this does not diminish the significance of the findings as

the sample of participants in this study does represent the largest qualitative exploration of Muslim teachers to date and can therefore meaningfully contribute to the current scholarly debates identified in the literature.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants according to the ontological needs of the study (Marshall, 1996, p. 523). A working definition of 'Muslim RE teachers' was used to develop the sample parameters for participant selection. These criteria were:

- were self-identifying Muslims that;
- were the holder of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), and were working as, or had worked as, an RE teacher as identified by job, or was the principal subject that they taught, and;
- had worked in State secondary schools.

These criteria were surprisingly difficult to develop, given the complexities of defining both the 'Muslim' and 'RE teacher' attributes, and so an open set of criteria was opted for. This was also a pragmatic choice to attract as many potential participants as possible.

Although it is not within the purview of this chapter to go into the debates surrounding the conceptual ambiguity of the term identity, as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) argue 'self-identity' is used to designate a specific kind of identity under study. I use their definition of self-identification as a '"situated subjectivity"': one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and how of (given the first two) one is prepared to act' (2000, p. 17). In this study the notion of 'self-identifying Muslim' meant individuals who understood themselves and stated that they were Muslims (although not necessarily just Muslims), positioned themselves as Muslims in society, and acted in a way they understood as being Muslim. As such, the notion of "Muslim" in this study is flexible, determined solely by one's self-identification as Muslim, and not by any other "official" identifier of religion - i.e. visible markers or practices or statement of faith. This not only fits with the social constructivist theoretical underpinnings of the study - that sees actors as constructing their identities - but also resists the reifying tendency of other, stronger forms of identification (2000, pp. 14-15). Furthermore, there were no limitations on specific Islamic denominations that constituted 'Muslim'. This is pertinent given the contested categories of Shia Muslims and Ahmadi Muslims, denominations to which several participants belonged.

Similarly, the definition of 'RE teacher' required some flexibility as RE can go by a variety of names: World Issues, Philosophy and Ethics, Theories of Knowledge, to name a few. As such, suitable courses were identified through exam accreditation - i.e. they led to a GCSE or A level examination in Religious Education - or by content, if the course was the way in which the school met its requirement to provide RE for its pupils (see HM Government, 1988, p. Section 8.3). The definition of

a teacher as: someone who holds QTS and teaching post, either full time or part time, at a school, and were a teacher of a reported subject, was adapted from the methodology used by the DfE in its school workforce statistics data (Department for Education, 2018, p. 20). This definition allowed for the inclusion of teachers who had initially trained in a different subject (i.e. Mathematics), but who had ended up teaching RE as part of their careers.

Additionally, the decision to eschew primary schools came from the use of GCSE and A level exam boards in the selection of RE teachers. I have also avoided Muslim faith schools as the identity work within the wider educational context would not be as salient in schools with an Islamic ethos. According to the latest Ofsted guidelines all schools are required to provide RE as part of a 'broad and balanced curriculum' along with PSHCE and SMSC development, although faith schools can do this according to their faith ethos (Department for Education 2014, p. 4).

### *Recruitment*

Participant recruitment was primarily conducted online, utilising the networks I had joined during my work as an RE teacher. A Call for Participants (see Appendix 5 – Call for Participants Project Summary Leaflet) outlying the central research questions was distributed amongst a number of professional networks, namely: Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education (AULRE), National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE), an article in REToday magazine, a professional RE teacher network Facebook group, as well as through my attendance at a number of RE-related conferences, and drawing on my own personal networks from my time as an RE teacher. By far the most successful recruitment site was through the Facebook group, from which 19 of the 21 participants were recruited. Snowball sampling also provided an avenue for recruitment, conducted via these Facebook posts as participants made others aware of the study. Post-interview, the participants were sent an email of thanks for their contribution to the study along with a copy of the Call for Participants to facilitate the snowballing. As such, the sample is potentially limited to those who are present online and actively engaged with the "online RE sphere" and missing those who teach RE as part of their wider teaching remit. There were also a number of ethical issues surrounding recruitment through social media (particularly Facebook), which are discussed later in the chapter.

## 4.3 Ethical Considerations

Issues of ethics attend to the 'codes and principles' to conduct research with integrity (May, 2011, p. 61). Given the sensitive nature of this research, these ethical considerations shaped the research design considerably. The guidance of my supervisors Prof. Gilliat-Ray and Prof. Hadfield, who have expertise in conducting sensitive research in schools and other public institutions, was invaluable in pinpointing potential ethical dilemmas and developing strategies to manage these. My joint

supervision between the School of History, Archaeology and Religion (SHARE) and the School of Social Sciences (SOCSCI) also allowed me to seek ethical approval through SOCSCI, who have extensive expertise in qualitative research ethics. I derive confidence from this choice, as SOCSI were better placed to scrutinise my research design with regards to the sensitive ethical considerations that my project raised. As such, the present study has been ethically approved by Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (see Appendices 6 and 7 – Ethical Approval Confirmations).[12] The study was designed according to BERA's (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* and Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee guidelines. I believe that the resultant research design was therefore robust and conducted within the codes of ethical practice expected by researchers in both sociology and education.

A guiding principle in the research design was the practicality of the research. As an ex-RE teacher who has conducted action research, I was keenly aware of the possible detriment to workload and pressure that participation in my study could involve. Similarly, BERA (2018, p. 20) makes clear that 'researchers should consider the impact of their research on the lives and workloads of participants, particularly when researching vulnerable or over-researched populations'. The participants in this study are a vulnerable group, which could have exacerbated existing barriers that teachers' workload already presents to participant recruitment. Throughout this chapter I have highlighted the ways I met the needs of the participants during the research process, which involved a flexible approach to the implementation of the research methods and often working around the participants' timetables. These decisions reflected this ethical concern, and I suggest, greatly enhanced the research process by fostering good relationships with those who took part.

Scholars have documented the potential challenges of researching British Muslim communities. Researching religious topics can be considered sensitive research from the outset (Renzetti & Lee, 1993), and the post 9/11 and 7/7 political context has magnified these sensitivities by fostering 'a general sense of mistrust towards people investigating issues concerning Muslims in Britain' (Bolognani, 2007, p. 282). This mistrust has been exacerbated by concerns with the misrepresentation of Islam resulting from these studies (Spalek, 2005), and research fatigue from the growth in studies surrounding British Muslims within the last decade (Hamid, 2017). Scholars have documented how Muslim participants fear 'damaging disclosures' in relation to counter-terrorism legislation (Gilliat-Ray, 2005), which is reified in the securitised contexts of schools. Bolognani (2007, p. 285) also raises awareness of the impact of the researcher's biography and their positioning as 'outsiders' from the Muslim community as a potential barrier to access. She (2007, p.

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[12] Ethical approval was amended to make the shadowing easier by requiring opt-out consent for pupils even under the age of 13. This was granted because my focus was mainly on the teacher and collected no specific data with regards to pupils.

285) writes of how she needed to be 'stamped '*halal*'' before she was permitted entry into fieldwork sites, and of an ongoing 'check' by her participants through questions about current affairs and views toward Islam. As such, being a white, male, non-Muslim researcher 'outside' the community presented potential barriers to accessing these Muslim participants.

Researching teachers and schools are also sensitive arenas for research (Cohen et al., 2000, pp. 53-56). Schools are themselves 'closed sites' that have policies in place to limit access to outside visitors, meaning that the researcher must demonstrate complicity to these policies for entry (Thomson & Hall, 2017, p. 155). There are an array of gatekeepers that must be informed: Headteachers, Heads of Department, Safeguarding Officers, administrators, as well as the teacher, all of whom can deny entry to a potential school site (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 54). The presence of children entails ethical and safeguarding concerns that can impact what kinds of research can be conducted on site (Thomson & Hall, 2017). Practical considerations, such as impact on the teacher's workload, are also potential barriers to access (BERA, 2018). Moreover, the perceptions and expectations from teachers toward 'outside' researchers can be one of mistrust and suspicion, seen as entailing some kind of judgement of their teaching ability (Thomson & Hall, 2017, p. 59). As Cohen et al. (2000, p. 55) state, all of these parties must be satisfied before research can commence, which can complicate and delay the procedure of gaining access.

### 4.3.1 Gaining Access and Consent

Access is the process of gaining permission and physical proximity to participants and sites in order to conduct the proposed research (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 53). As such, issues of access shape both the theoretical and methodological aspects of research design (May, 2011, p. 174). From the inception of this study, gaining access was a key consideration in research design. Researching participants who were both Muslims and RE teachers raised the dual challenges of accessing Muslim communities and also school sites, along with religion being the topic of inquiry, all of which have been characterised as sensitive research areas (Renzetti & Lee, 1993; Spalek, 2005). Therefore, many of the research design strategies employed to overcome these potential barriers were linked to the ethical issues involved in conducting this research.

Issues of access were considered early in the design phase of the study. The Research Proposal, Participant Information Sheets, and Consent Forms were designed according to both BERA's (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* and Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee guidelines (see Appendices 8-15 for Information and Consent sheets). At this stage I also underwent an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check that was needed to satisfy schools' safeguarding policies. Separate consent procedures were used for the interviews and the

participant shadows, because the interviews did not necessarily require me to access the school to conduct the research.

Key gatekeepers were identified that required consent: the participants, Head Teachers, Safeguarding Officers, and pupils in the classes I would be observing (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 54). Opt-in and opt-out consent procedures were formulated to manage the pupils' consent depending on the age group of the class (BERA 2018, pp. 15-16), and distributed only to the participants' classes, accompanied by a brief audio clip of myself explaining the research topic in accessible language (see Appendix 16 – Pupil Project Summary Speech). This was to make clear that I would not be observing them and that they would not be identified in the data. The teacher was tasked with managing the distribution and collection of these forms two weeks prior to my intended arrival. A single pupil refused consent for the present study, and observations that involved that pupil have not formed part of the data collected.

During the initial stages of participant recruitment I began a fieldwork journal to document the access process, in order to reflect on the impact that the access procedure had on the proceeding social relations with participants (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), and also to refine aspects of the study according to their needs. Notably, it was through these preliminary discussions that the fear of 'outing' a number of participants was raised, which problematised the school-based consent process, and led to a revised Participant Consent Form for school-based gatekeepers and subsequent re-approval from the Ethical Committee. This procedure for accessing participants for interview was used throughout the preparatory and data collection research phases.

Overall, there was surprisingly little difficulty gaining access to participants for interview or shadowing.

### 4.3.2 Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Data Storage

Ensuring confidentiality was vital to securing the trust of the participants. For Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2015, p. 617, italics in Saunders et. al.), confidentiality refers to '*all* information that is kept hidden from everyone except the primary research team'. These procedures help protect participants from the harm that could come from potentially damaging disclosures about themselves or third parties (BERA 2018, p. 19). This was an important consideration in my study because the participants could share controversial and damaging information about their schools or their practice, which could harm their positions as teachers within these institutions.

A key method of ensuring confidentiality was to limit who the data was shared with. In the Information Sheets the participants, and their schools, were made aware that only myself and my supervisors would have access to the data. Participants and schools were also made aware that I had

a duty to disclose behaviour 'that is likely to be harmful to the participants or others' (BERA 2018, p. 25). This reflected both safeguarding concerns and the statutory duty of *Prevent* applied to researchers (BERA 2018, p. 25). No such incidents were reported during this research. Despite some pressure, none of the data was shared with the participants' schools. Again, this was to protect their practice and to foster a sense of trust and security. I firmly maintained that this would be the case in all communication with school gatekeepers. In the field, enquiries were fended off with generic answers, and I was careful about making notes in social areas, particularly the staff room. Outside of the field, none of the data was shared with any parties other than my supervision team. Given the sensitive nature of the data and the potential for harm, as well as issues of anonymity (see below), I have also decided not to provide supplementary samples of interview transcripts in this thesis. Additionally, as I took photographs during my shadowing, images have not been included in the present thesis that could lead to the identification of the school or the participant.

Another key consideration was the anonymisation procedure. Saunders et al. (2015, p. 617) write that anonymisation is part of confidentiality that is concerned with 'keeping the participants' identities a secret'. However, they (2015, p. 618) also note that there is a lack of specific guidance on how to anonymise participants, particularly with regard to reporting the data. They (2015, p. 620) recommend consideration of the following six factors:

1) People's names
2) Places
3) Religious or cultural background
4) Occupation
5) Family relationships
6) Other potentially identifying information (i.e. disability)

Anonymisation also involves a compromise between sacrificing the integrity of the participants and their accounts to maximise anonymity, or providing a richer account of the participants at the risk of potential identification (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 627). Although 'blanket' anonymisation is seen as the staple method, by simply 'finding and replacing' all identifiable information (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 627), this has been criticised as a form of 'epistemic injustice' toward participants, particularly women and minority ethnic identities, by 'silencing' their biographies (Berkhout, 2013). Similarly, Guenther (2009, p. 412) draws attention to the 'politics of naming' in anonymity procedures, with the act of naming 'an act of power' by the researcher over participants in the development of pseudonyms. From these concerns, both Saunders et al. (2015) and Guenther (2009) advocate a research-determined approach to anonymisation, that attends to the specific

research process of the study, the requirements of the data in its presentation, and the adequate representation of the participants' biographies.

Within my study the decision of how to anonymise the data was particularly challenging. Conducting online recruitment and having a social media presence within an already tight-knit community intensified my concerns surrounding the degree of anonymisation. Given my method of recruitment, others could see who responded to Facebook posts, and often recommended other participants in these threads. Several of the participants are active members of the online RE community, and the Islamic denominations of some of the participants were also identifiable features. However, the participants biographies: their ethnicities, genders, Islamic denominations, school contexts, and professional life phases, are all significant factors in the analysis. Therefore, my study required that this data be included in the reporting in some capacity.

To meet this balance, I initially adopted a 'fictionalising' approach to reporting the data (BERA 2018, p. 21). 'Fictionalising' involves creating composite 'characters' from shared attributes and amalgamated stories from the data (Campbell, 2000). As Campbell (2000, p. 82) states, this can enrich the reporting of the stories which teachers share that emphasise the experience of those doing the telling. This has been used to great effect by Scott-Baumann and Cheruvallil-Contractor (2015), using key characters and narrative vignettes to hold a conceptual thread throughout. Thus, 'fictionalising' was potentially a powerful tool to enhance the reporting and help maintain the anonymity of the participants. However, in practice I found the process of fictionalising the participants extremely problematic. I felt uncomfortable "chopping up" the rich tapestry of these individuals' lives into neat conceptual characters, and was concerned about committing a form of epistemic violence by denying the individual participants their own ethnicities, religious identification, and gender.

Instead, I have employed a contextually determined anonymisation procedure, as noted above. In the present study all of the participants' names, names of their schools, place names, and subject names other than 'RE' have been changed to protect anonymity. These names still reflect gender, marital status, and cultural background. During the fieldwork, participants were identified by initials which were subsequently redacted, and upon uploading data to NVivo 10 each participant was assigned by a number. I have also included key biographical information in the Sample Data for reference. The participants' ages, areas, and professional life phases have been anonymised with broad categories, to avoid specificity. However, the participants' genders, ethnicities, and denominational identifications have been kept to maintain their integrity, and the integrity of the presentation of the data, given the importance of these categories in the analysis. In an effort to

include their voices further, I have also cited the moments in the interviews and fieldnotes when those statements were made. I feel that this has struck a balance between representing the participants with integrity, and protecting their anonymity.

Data storage was also a concern regarding the confidentiality of the participants. I followed Cardiff University's (2017, section 3.5) data storage guidelines for this purpose. Hard copies of data (consent forms, fieldnotes, and interview schedules) were stored in a locked box in my room and were not removed from this location. Digital data was held in a password protected folder on a password protected hard drive and home desktop computer and Microsoft Office files were encrypted using Windows 10 Encrypting Files System. The NVivo 10 project was also password protected using its own password-protection capability. Furthermore, none of the data was shared via email or online messaging, nor hosted on an online data storage platform.

## 4.4 Methodological Reflections

As noted in the Introduction, the qualitative researcher co-constructs the research process, bringing themselves into the research through their own positionality and experiences (Attia & Edge, 2017). In the Introduction I reflected upon the impact of my own biography on this research, and my position as both an 'insider' and 'outsider' to the teachers that I was researching. In this section I wish to consider some further aspects of my experience conducting the research, specifically on the experience of shadowing.

Throughout I have discussed how potentially difficult and sensitive this research was, and how recruiting participants and gaining access could have been problematic. However, I have been surprised by the ease with which participants were recruited. The overall sample was limited, by the small size of the community of 'Muslim RE teachers' rather than by any sensitivities they had about the project. As I have mentioned throughout, I believe the success of this aspect of the research is due to both my 'insider' knowledge of RE and teaching, and the pragmatic approach to the research design. Importantly, this emphasis on pragmatism has received little attention in education research primers, which prioritise the theoretical and methodological ideal over the experience of the participants. Thus, I would suggest that this be raised as an important consideration for future educational research.

However, the process of shadowing was an intense experience, emotionally and physically, for myself as a researcher. As Gilliat-Ray (2011, p. 482) writes, shadowing requires 'nothing less than the total immersion of our senses and sensibilities', but maintaining this level of engagement was

challenging.  Although the intensity of shadowing has been documented (Gill et al., 2014; Gilliat-Ray, 2011; McDonald, 2005), being back inside the classroom still came as quite a shock. Long commutes, early school-day starts, and inevitable late finishes to complete marking meant that shadowing days were up to 16 hours long, without factoring in the transcription time afterward. I was grateful for my supervisors' advice to conduct two to three days shadowing a week in order to recuperate for the next shadowing period.

An interesting and unforeseen physical challenge was conducting research during Ramadan. During the final two shadows the participants were fasting, and so avoided going to the staff room or canteen at break times. Given my commitment to following them and experiencing their school day as fully as possible, this also incidentally meant that I fasted with them. This was an unforeseen challenge of researching Muslims specifically, especially as an 'outsider' that had not prepared for this, such as by partaking in *suhoor* (the pre-dawn meal). Whilst this offered an incredible insight into the challenges of fasting whilst teaching (see Chapter 6), fasting impacted on my concentration and capacity to engage later in the day, and the lack of water that made speaking difficult. On reflection, I think this was a fascinating aspect of the shadowing with Muslim participants that bears future consideration for fieldwork, potentially requiring the researcher to partake in *suhoor* as well.

Given the intense relationship between participant and researcher in shadowing, managing my emotions also became a significant part of my shadowing experience. Whilst the physicality of qualitative research has been widely discussed, particularly around the body (Gilliat-Ray, 2010a), the emotional dimension of such research is growing in awareness (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2009). In terms of emotion's impact on the research process, Dickson-Swift et al. (2009) note how emotions around events, participants, or places can affect the analysis that is conducted. Its potential impact on the research findings therefore warrant reflection, just like other biographical aspects of the researcher.

In this regard, Gilliat-Ray (2011, p. 483) suggests that maintaining a 'critical proximity' to the participant is an appropriate level of closeness. She writes that

> The notion of *critical proximity* is perhaps a way out of the impasse, where it recognizes the need to be self-aware and reflexive, but also sympathetically and fully engaged in the process of understanding the world of another.

This critical proximity allows sympathy for the participants experience, whilst also avoiding privileging their view as the only view within that organisation (2011, p. 483). Problematically, I think there is a tendency to assume that the researcher will be sympathetic to the participants' views and

experience, thereby stressing the importance of maintaining the *critical* distance. In contrast, some of my experience involved feelings of strong disagreement that affected my capacity to remain in *proximity* to the participants.

In my research, there were several moments that I found challenging emotionally, and this made it hard to maintain the closeness in this relationship. These moments tended to be centred around the tensions of teaching about homosexuality, discussed at length in Chapter 7, and of the non-religious. The participants had expressed views that I strongly disagreed with, both inside and outside of the classroom. During these moments, I wished to step in and give a counter-point, especially during moments of teaching, but felt that this was outside of my role as researcher. As such, I was left with these feelings of upset, and on occasion anger, held in whilst I silently made notes. When recollecting these events during the writing up of the thesis, these emotions resurged. For this reason, Chapter 7 was the most difficult part of this thesis to write because I was constantly and carefully reflecting on how I felt about what I was putting on the page. I found these reflective annotations extremely helpful during the writing-up process, noting on the page how ideas made me feel, and whether this was a representation of my feelings or what the participants were experiencing. There were moments where I had thought it too difficult to write, and considered writing in a new direction, but the discussion was too important to ignore.

To manage these emotional challenges, I had to develop and remind myself of my own understanding of the role of the researcher in this project, and in qualitative research generally. As Gilliat-Ray (2011) advocates, I constantly reminded myself of the research questions – the need to represent how the participants were experiencing aspects of their RE teaching, rather than the normative dimensions of this debate. In this way, I was reminded of the idea of 'respectful presence' that I had encountered in previous inter-faith activities that I engaged with as an RE teacher. This presence was not sympathetic agreement with the viewpoint of the participants, nor critical questioning of the participants' experience. Rather presence was understood as being a respectful witness to their experience. Especially during the writing up, this entailed keeping to the fore the idea that for these participants as Muslims this aspect of their experience was problematic, and that the beliefs underpinning this should be respected. In part, this necessitated privileging the accounts of the participants, as the experts in the classroom and of their own experiences. The 'para-ethnographic' nature of shadowing lends itself particularly well to theorising in this way, understanding the participants as reflective experts in their own right who have already critically considered the various perspectives available to them (Powell, 2015). So, in a way, they had already engaged in this critical work to come to this point. I leave it to the reader to consider whether I have

maintained a 'respectful presence' in Chapter 7, by focussing on their experience over the normative

claims underpinning these debates.

# Chapter 5: "I'm Not a Muslim RE Teacher..." – Reconsidering Narratives of Muslim Teacher Identity

The main research question for this project was to explore the relationship between the participants' faith and their professional role as RE teachers in their school contexts. To date very little work has been conducted that attempts to uncover this relationship (Mogra, 2010, 2013, 2014; Panjwani, 2016). Through this exploration, I reveal how the participants understood their Muslim identity in their construction of their teacher identity.

Accordingly, I begin with an exploration of the ways the participants spoke of their identities as 'Muslim RE teachers'. Here their stories reveal how they have constructed their identity from the various repertoires of meaning-making available to them (Biesta et al., 2017). I focus on their contestation of the notion of the 'Muslim RE teacher', which was used as the primary unit of analysis. This, and the general preference for the label 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim', I argue problematises the assumption that they are 'Muslim first'. Rather, their accounts suggest that they had constructed a distinction between their Muslim and RE teacher attributes, positioning their faith 'backstage' in their school contexts. The small number of participants who did accept the designation 'Muslim RE teacher' are then used to explore how some did not resist this positioning and offer a counter-point to this prevailing picture.

I conclude that these narratives draw attention to the participants' agency as RE teachers as well as Muslims, understood as two repertoires within which they were positioned, that brought different, yet overlapping, agentic goals and desires. This finding offers a unique perspective on the identity construction of British Muslims more widely, from the vantage point of the other social roles they occupy. Following the suggestion of this more sophisticated account of agency, I then go on to explore how this was achieved in their practice.

## 5.0 Contesting the 'Muslim RE Teacher'

The image constructed in the small body of literature so far, is that for Muslim teachers, their Muslim identity-attribute will be their primary identity-attribute. This is encapsulated in the motif of 'Muslim first' that pervades scholarly accounts of Muslims in education (Geaves, 2005; Panjwani, 2017; Shah, 2009, 2018). In the case of Muslim teachers, BME research has constantly highlighted the incorporation of Muslimness in the construction of their teacher identities (Benn, 2003; Benn et al., 2011; Osler, 2003; Shah, 2016; Shah & Shaikh, 2010). Similarly, Mogra's (2009, 2010, 2013, 2014) work suggests that Islamic values underpinned the educational values of his participants,

encapsulated in the motif of the Prophet Muhammad as teacher. Wider research posits that Islamic conceptions of education, particularly its holistic link between knowledge (*'ilm*) and character (*adab*), shape the Muslim experience of education (Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2013; Wilkinson, 2015). Research exploring Christian RE teachers also suggests that their faith underpins their educational values and practices (Bryan & Revell, 2011; Bryan & Worsley, 2015b; Connor, 2015; Cooling, 2002; Fancourt, 2017; Revell & Walters, 2010), especially in the case of Catholic teachers (Coll, 2006, 2007, 2009).

From this literature, I developed the label 'Muslim RE teacher' to conceptualise the primary unit of analysis. Labelling is a process of attribution of the kinds of motives, characteristics, and attributes that underpin an actor's construction of their identity (P. Atkinson, 2017, Chapter 5). The label 'Muslim RE teacher' represented a teacher for whom their primary identity-attribute would be their faith. In reference to the wider literature, I had assumed that their values and practices as RE teachers would be predominantly determined by their values and practices as Muslims. Hence, I had also assumed that such a label would not be problematic given its pervasiveness in the literature so far.

However, I was struck by how contested the label 'Muslim RE teacher' was. Miss Mazhar brought this immediately to my attention during the pilot study, rejecting the label of 'Muslim RE teacher' for that of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim':

> Like yes I am Muslim but I don't necessarily identify myself as a Muslim teacher? I'm an [RE][13] teacher who happens to be Muslim, like I'm not a Muslim teacher... in that sense (Interview 2, 20:30 – 20:39).

From this pilot interview onward, the label 'Muslim RE teacher' was continually debated. Their contestation immediately brought into question the primacy of their faith in the construction of their teacher identities. This is significant because this contestation shaped the whole of the study, as my labelling of them as 'Muslim RE teachers' seemed to have failed to articulate how they understood themselves. The resultant conversations caused me to re-examine not only my assumptions of Islam but also to question the usefulness of the 'Muslim teacher' as the conceptual category used in the literature.

Rather, these contestations reveal a plethora of ways in which the participants understand themselves in school. This general de-prioritisation of the 'Muslim' identity attribute is more than a simple clarification of the type of non-confessional RE they were engaged in, highlighting the wider

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[13] Subject changed to protect anonymity.

narratives surrounding how the participants generally understood themselves, their role, and the place of their faith. Specifically, a continuum of configurations seemed to emerge, based around the labels 'Muslim RE teacher', 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim', and 'just an RE teacher' (see Figure 5.1). Although these labels are not fixed, they reflect points on a continuum that syntactically represent the way in which these participants can configure their faith and professional role within their school contexts, sometimes shifting moment by moment depending on the topic of discussion in the classroom. As such, an exploration of these labels illuminates various processes underpinning the construction of these participants' workplace identities.

| 'Muslim RE teacher' | 'RE teachers who happens to be Muslim' | 'Just an RE teacher' |
|---|---|---|
| • Maintenance of Muslim as primary/core identity-attribute.<br>• Muslimness explicit in role.<br>• Although boundary present, RE teacher identity subsumed within Muslim framework.<br>• Tended to be experienced teachers (8+ years). | • Distancing between Muslim and RE teacher identity-attributes.<br>• RE teacher frontstage, Muslim backstage.<br>• Muslim identity still present – evoked and incorporated, but within RE teaching framework.<br>• Tended to be established teachers (4-7 years). | • Removal of Muslim identity attribute.<br>• Perception that Muslim identity had no impact.<br>• Firm adoption of 'neutral RE teacher' professional discourse.<br>• Tended to be newer teachers (0-3 years). |

Figure 5.1 – *Continuum of "Muslim RE teacher" configurations*

### 5.0.1 RE Teacher Who Happens to be Muslim

By far the most common label was that of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim'. Miss Mazhar followed that:

> Like the kids don't know, the kids ask me and I say my religion or lack of is not relevant to the subject that I am presenting, rather than oh she's presenting her view, you know they might deduce or induce that I am a strong Muslim, like where I am from and stuff, but it's not part of my identity as a teacher necessarily (Interview 2, 20:30 – 20:39).

Mr Shah described himself as:

> I see myself as an RE teacher who happens to be a Muslim, just as others would be RE teachers that happen to be humanists or Buddhists or whatever, or nothing at all… I think that maybe being a Muslim teaching RE is with that

consciousness also that I have possibly seen as representing my faith in the classroom without promoting it so, you know, I am conscious that I might be seen as being an ambassador for Islam or maybe more specifically for the Ahmadi community (Interview 13, 1:37:09 – 1:40:00).

The use of this label was particularly striking as it was also how the participants in Mogra's (2009) study primarily described themselves. Through this label they are clearly marking a distinction between two positions - a faith position and an educational position. Mogra (2009, p. 212) refers to a similar distinction made by his participants between nurture and education. The construction and maintenance of these participants' teacher identities seems to revolve around this distinction.

Furthermore, and again echoing Mogra (2009, p. 212), here the participants seem to be constructing themselves primarily as RE teachers first and foremost. Despite the centrality of faith in their lives, they seem to position their faith backstage in their work. This is encapsulated in Miss Mazhar's account, whose "strong Muslim" identity doesn't "necessarily" come into her teacher identity. In doing so, the participants here seem to place an emphasis on the fact that their teacher identity is not dependent on their identity as Muslims to any significant degree. It is something that they "happen to be".

However, their refusal to jettison their Muslim identity entirely attests to some degree of incorporation. As Mr Shah alludes to, it represents a "consciousness" much like Mogra's (2009, p. 212) observation that Islam continued to inform their value system. However, he also alludes to the fact that his Muslim identity is invoked in the classroom by others, seeing him as a "representative" of Muslims and "ambassador" for his particular Islamic community. Unlike in Mogra's (2009) analysis, this reveals an awareness that their Muslimness can be evoked by others within their work, as well as by their own embodiment of their religious values and practices.

In these ways, the use of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' label itself syntactically represents the relationship of their identities in their school contexts. In contrast to the 'Muslim RE teacher' label that not only places the Muslim first but also binds the two positions together, the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' places the RE teacher first and distances the Muslim attribute. However, their Muslim identity is still present behind their teacher identity, evoked and incorporated in various ways within their work. I suggest this label, then, reflects an ongoing distancing between their faith and their professional role. It also reveals several intersecting processes that affected the participants' teacher identity construction in relation to how their faith had to be managed, as both distanced and elicited.

### 5.0.2 Just an RE Teacher

Other participants referred to themselves as 'just an RE teacher'. In contrast to the above, here their Muslim identity-attribute was completely removed from their labelling. For example, Miss Memon stated that:

> I just saw myself as an RE teacher. I actually wouldn't classify myself as a Muslim RE teacher, I would not bring my religion into it, I would just say that I was a RE teacher. But during the lesson students asked me about my faith I would openly say that yes I am a Muslim (Interview 15, 50:41 – 1:04:01).

For Mr Begum:

> I would definitely say just an RE teacher because I do not identify within a certain category or a certain box so I wouldn't do that so I would just say RE teacher, yeah I would definitely say that (Interview 14, 28:38 – 40:53).

The removal of 'Muslim' in these cases emphasises that their faith was not incorporated into their teacher role, suggesting that they were seemingly able to completely bracket off their faith commitments in their practice. Miss Memon declares this clearly - she does not "bring her religion into it". This is not so much a distinction of positions but declaration that there is only one position that they occupy in their school contexts: that of the RE teacher. It is also a clear statement of their notions of RE professionalism as the neutral RE teacher, which I discuss later.

For the moment, however, the participants' own accounts problematised the suggestion that they could remove their faith completely. As Miss Memon notes, she still "openly" states that she is Muslim to the pupils in her class. Similarly, Mr Begum felt that the pupils "figured out" whether he was Muslim through a process of elimination by asking him questions (Interview 14, 28:38 – 40:53). Again, this highlights that others could elicit their faith in the construction of their teacher identity, indicating the presence of a racialisation dynamic. It also highlights a moral dynamic: that some of the participants, like Miss Memon, felt uncomfortable with not declaring their Muslim identity when explicitly asked, but still saw this personal disclosure as irrelevant to their teacher identity.

Being 'just RE teachers' therefore seems questionable. I posit that this dissonance can be explained in two ways. Firstly, there was a distinctly temporal dimension to these accounts. The participants who saw themselves as 'just RE teachers' were at the earliest stages of their careers, like Miss Memon and Mr Begum who were both NQTs at the time of interview. Day et al. (2006, p. x) write that teachers during this stage are focussed on developing their efficacy in the classroom. As such, their teacher identities tend to be orientated solely around the notions of teacher professionalism (Day et al., 2006, p. xii). Accordingly, their suggestion that their Muslim identity formed no part of

their teacher identity seems to be more a lack of awareness of the ways in which their faith did come into their work. I, myself felt the lack of discussion around one's own faith during my own ITT, which created the sense that it was something that shouldn't be mentioned. In contrast, the 'RE teachers who happened to be Muslim' tended to have been in post for at least several years. This seems to have brought with it an increased awareness of the impact of their biographies on aspects of their teacher identity as their sense of efficacy developed. From this perspective, I believe that this label reveals a temporal direction in the relationship between the participants' faith and professional role, as something that matures during their careers.

Secondly, Mr Begum's account also alludes to a link between the understanding of their faith and their teacher identity. Mr Begum defined himself as a "cultural Muslim", and, in his account, this seemingly allowed him to occupy a purely 'RE teacher' position. As I discuss later, the participants' specific configurations of their faith facilitate different possibilities of being in their contexts by emphasising particular aspects of their identity.

Consequently, the label of 'just RE teachers' suggests that, for some, there was no relationship between their faith and their role because their faith simply was not present. Thus, the removal of 'Muslim' from their label represents the removal of their faith from their teacher identity entirely, and a complete bracketing off. As such, there seemed to be times and spaces where their faith did not seem to matter at all in their work as RE teachers.

However, I would argue that this complete bracketing off was an 'impossible aim', to borrow from Franken and Loobyuck's (2017) critique of the 'neutral' RE teacher. Instead, I would suggest that this label draws attention to the participants' notions of professionalism, degree of awareness of their faith and its potential impact, and highlights the power that others have in evoking it in their construction.

### 5.0.3 Muslim RE Teacher

There was a smaller number of participants who did identify as 'Muslim RE teachers'. These participants seemed to resist the bracketing off of their faith expressed in the previous labels. Mrs Khan exemplified the 'Muslim RE teacher', who, as we saw in the Introduction, had proudly emblazoned her Muslim identity on her classroom door. When I asked her about her teacher identity, she maintained that she was a "Muslim RE teacher":

> I do see myself as a Muslim RE teacher, and I do see myself as advocating
> Islam wherever I can, and giving them the knowledge that they need (Interview
> 16, 13:04 – 23:49).

More so than the other participants, for Mrs Khan her faith was an explicit part of her teacher identity and classroom practice. As an "advocate" of Islam, arguably she has subsumed her role as RE teacher within the repertoire of her faith. This suggests that there is an intimate relationship between her professional role and herself as a Muslim, with the former reflecting the latter. Thus, the 'Muslim RE teacher' illustrates the 'Muslim first' motif prevalent in the wider literature.

Again, the temporal and contextual aspects of Mrs Khan's teacher identity are worth noting. She followed:

> I just have sort of become a bit more used to what I am? Because of just sort of moulded into it and I've become it. But I think if I was in a sort of mainstream, non-Muslim [majority] school, it would be something that I think I would challenge myself with and I would question, maybe because it's quite difficult to connect like with the problems I had before (Interview 16, 13:04 – 23:49).

As an experienced teacher[14], for Mrs Khan the 'Muslim RE teacher' is something that she has been "moulded" into. Other 'Muslim RE teachers' mentioned a similar process of growing in confidence with regards to their faith, both personally and professionally. As Day et al. (2006, p. x) notes, after eight years in their careers teachers start to manage and change the now wider roles they have acquired, having established their efficacy as professionals. It could be suggested that, as Head of Department, Mrs Khan has proven her credentials as an educator and so can begin to play with the notions of professionalism within which she is situated, which includes a more explicit incorporation of her faith.

However, given the "challenges" that she had faced in her previous schools, I tentatively believe that this is the kind of teacher she always was, but it is more her school context that facilitated this. Mrs Khan works in a Christian ethos academy with a predominantly Muslim pupil population, and, as she alludes to, the general presence of Muslims and Islam in her school seems to facilitate the incorporation of her faith. During my fieldwork with Mrs Khan, she explicitly express this *Ummatic* notion of teacher identity (fieldnotes 16, March 2017, p. 76), reminiscent of the wider 'Muslim first' discourse of the *Ummah* as a super-ordinate identity (Shah, 2018). There was also a sense that she was living 'vicariously' through her Muslim pupils. 'Vicarious religion' conveys 'the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number', with the majority living their faith 'vicariously' through the example of this active minority (Davie, 2007, pp. 22-23). Similarly, Mrs Khan felt she could express her Muslimness through her shared faith with her Muslim pupils,

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[14] A Head of Department with over 10 years of RE teaching experience in several schools.

who brought the Islamic tradition with them and were able to express it freely. As I explore in Chapter 6, this vicariousness also shaped Mrs Khan's practice. It also highlights their construction from the perspective of Muslim pupils, which brought a host of other explicitly religious expectations.

It is important, however, not to overstate the Muslimness of Mrs Khan's account. Within the 'Muslim RE teacher' is still the 'RE teacher', and so she still referred to its aims and pedagogy. For example, her idea of advocacy incorporated the non-confessional distinction, "strengthening faith" by learning about other religions:

> Again I came to the conclusion that my role is to impart knowledge and is not to enforce knowledge on students and at the end of the day each student is accountable also, it's up to each student to take what they learn and build on that so I mean I tell students that whatever they learn in life, especially with Muslim students that, I think, learning about other faiths and philosophy and everything else I think from myself I think other students are more comfortable with their faith, makes their faith stronger (Interview 16, 13:04 – 23:49).

Again, Mrs Khan's approach makes a distinction between nurture and education, in the difference between "imparting" and "enforcing" knowledge. However, this is orientated toward an arguably confessional aim. In this way, her pedagogy reflected a 'weak form of critical openness' advocated by Ipgrave (1999) to support Muslim pupils in RE, using the discussion of other faiths to encourage reflection on their own, which she believes will strengthen their faith rather than undermine it.

Thus, the label of 'Muslim RE teacher' seemed to be consonant with my original conceptualisation from the literature, which understood the Muslim identity-attribute as the core or primary attribute, even if its prevalence was not. It syntactically represents the subsuming of the professional discourse of RE within the meaning-making repertoire of their faith. There still seemed to be boundaries around confessionalism and bias, particularly toward their representation of other religions, but this was still orientated toward a clear "advocacy" of Islam. Thus, there seemed to be little distancing or removal of faith in these instances, but instead a reconfiguration of the RE teacher within their religious repertoire to make their faith explicit within their school contexts and position it frontstage.

### 5.0.4 Brief Reflection

The development of this continuum has revealed three labels that encapsulate various ways in which the participants had constructed their teacher identities. The general contestation of the 'Muslim RE teacher', and the preference for other configurations, provides evidence that, in the main, these participants did not see themselves as 'Muslim first' when it came to their identities as

RE teachers. Rather, at the core of many of their identities was the construction and maintenance of a boundary between their faith and their professional role, which reflects their understanding of both of these identity-attributes. However, the configurations of these identity-attributes were also in part subject to their construction by others in their school contexts. Discussed further in Chapter 6, this meant that the participants were often shifting along the continuum depending on the context of a given moment or interaction. Yet, the preference for 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' seems to suggest that this leans toward a default mode, centring around this boundary-making. Given the ubiquitousness of the boundary between faith and professionalism, I now go onto discuss how their role was constructed and how this positioned their Muslim identity in more detail.

## 5.1 Constructing the 'RE Teacher'

Speaking about their concept of the 'RE teacher', the participants subscribed to the aims and values of RE outlined in the literature review. Four aspects were commonly referred to in their accounts: neutrality, subject knowledge, pedagogy, and personal qualities. The following discussion considers the first two of these, with the latter two discussed in the next chapter.

### 5.1.1 Neutrality

Discussed in the Literature Review, a recurring tension in the role of the non-confessional RE teacher is the place of the teacher's own beliefs (Bryan & Revell, 2011; Cooling, 2002; Everington, 2016; Fancourt, 2007; Franken & Loobuyck, 2017; Grimmitt, 1981, 1987; Jackson & Everington, 2017). In their non-confessional role, the RE teacher's own beliefs should not unduly influence pupils - such as through their affirmation of their religious beliefs over others, or the implicit shaping of religions according to the teacher's own biases. This has given rise to the professional discourse of the neutral RE teacher, which requires the 'concealment of any personal commitment on the teacher's part, and any personal views of pupils are set to one side' (Jackson & Everington, 2017, p. 10).[15] The skill, then, is in distinguishing between 'when to contain their personal commitments and how to present material from a religion/religious tradition from the point of view of an adherent' (Jackson & Everington, 2017, p. 10). The professional discourse of the neutral RE teacher is therefore dependent on the capacity of RE teachers to place their faith backstage during their practice.

Concerns surrounding neutrality were a central theme in the participants' notions of professionalism and the construction of themselves as RE teachers. This was encapsulated in the motif "I'm teaching not preaching":

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[15] During my teacher training this was the professional discourse in which I was situated.

> You are not preaching religion, you are just educating people on the differences. So, I think you have to realise yourself how you're coming across. If you're teaching from a personal aspect, then obviously, you are going preach do you know what I mean? But if you're not then it shouldn't come into it, personally (Miss Memon, Interview 15 50:41-1:04:41).

> I tell my friends look, it's the way you are seeing it, you are not preaching, you are teaching, learn the difference between the two, and you're not doing anything wrong (Miss Mahmood, Interview 21 1:06:34-1:11:01).

Others expressed that their personal faith was "irrelevant" to their RE teaching:

> I don't think religion is important when it comes to teaching RE. You can be from any background, but that's irrelevant to being an RE teacher (Mrs Medhi, Interview 9, 48:16 – 52:20).

> But no actually I can say that I don't think that my personal beliefs in any way shape my teaching career, my teaching full stop in the classroom, I don't think it does (Miss Bashir, Interview 12, 1:02:52 – 1:16:10).

The idea of neutrality defined the participants' notions of professionalism. I was taken aback by how common the usage of this motif was, used almost identically across the participants' accounts. It is unclear from where this motif had emerged, and there are no data to suggest that it was part of their formal ITT. I tentatively believe that this motif had developed *ad hoc* during their careers, from their ongoing reflections on their teacher identities. The words "I'm teaching not preaching" seem to reflect a potential nexus of tensions that the participants anticipated between their confessional faith position and non-confessional professional position, perhaps from when they started ITT. Its use suggests that this motif is an important narrative strategy of coherence: a way for them to understand and legitimise who they are and what they are doing in their work. This claim is revisited in Chapter 7, where I explore coherence and tensions in more depth.

So, despite the critiques of scholars, the consistent use of this motif within the data strongly suggests that the neutral RE teacher continues to be the dominant professional narrative in which these RE teachers situated themselves. It also framed the other aspects of their RE teacher identity. Moreover, its potential use as a narrative strategy of coherence highlights a possible benefit of neutrality in the construction of their RE teacher identities, as religiously-committed individuals. Consequently, their notions of RE professionalism seemed to fundamentally involve a demarcation of boundaries between their personal identities as Muslims and their professional requirement to

embody neutrality. This provides further support for the distancing also suggested by their own labelling. As such, it is worth unpicking what the participants meant by 'neutrality'.

### 5.1.2 Types of Neutrality

There were three overlapping themes that made up the notion of neutrality, which reflected different interpretations of this general professional discourse. Firstly, neutrality was understood as being objective. Objectivity in this instance reflected the articulation of neutrality in the above literature, fundamentally concerned with avoiding bias or confessionalism in their teaching of religion by concealing their commitment. The use of the motif "I'm teaching not preaching" seemed to encapsulate this commitment, as Miss Mahmood explained:

> That's the important thing. I will teach about Buddha's and Sikhs and Hindus and others, but that doesn't mean I believe in it. We are educating, there is a fine line between educating and going into belief (Interview 21 1:06:34-1:11:01).

The "fine line" between "educating about" and "going into belief" maps on to RE's pedagogical distinction between learning 'about' and learning 'from' religion (Grimmit, 1973; Teece, 2010). Here neutrality is understood as the portrayal of the 'facts' of religion, devoid of any epistemic commitment in its presentation, as in the phenomenological model (Barnes, 2000). In contrast, "going into belief" would involve going beyond the facts. This created an important distinction about what participants were teaching, in that they were not necessarily teaching what they believed in.

Support for objectivity was spoken of in relation to concerns about their own authority as teachers and their potential to "indoctrinate", and in terms of a pedagogical commitment to "accuracy" and "avoiding bias". For example, Miss Memon defined her pedagogy as:

> I think it is to give accurate information to students so they are not influenced by outside sources, because I feel like teachers, RE teachers - I believe they are the only source of accurate information the students will get, rather than being influenced by outside - by the media or outside sources (Interview 15, 39:55 – 50:41).

It is interesting to note that understanding neutrality as objectivity tended to be suggested by newer teachers, as in the example above. Discussed above, research has suggested that teachers in the formative stages of their careers tend to more rigidly define themselves according to their 'professional knowledge landscape', as they have yet to develop the 'personal practical knowledge' dimension of their teaching (Day et al., 2006). As such, this account of neutrality seemed quite naïve, given the limits to which they could conceal their personal commitments. This again reveals a

projective dimension to their agency as teacher that develops over time. Still, the use of the "teaching not preaching" motif was commonplace throughout the participants' narratives, but its meaning seemed to evolve throughout the teachers' careers.

Neutrality was also understood as being impartial. Impartiality involved the incorporation of the participants' commitments in the classroom as one view point amongst others. Here they acted as a facilitator between these different viewpoints, including their own, in a dialogical style (Fancourt, 2007). For example, Mr Shah stated that:

> I presented my perspective on it and [pupils] wanted there to be a debate… So as long as they're presented with both sides of the debate, you know, that's all you can do. You are not there to push or promote a particular line of thinking. I was just very pleased with that approach. It worked really well (Interview 13, 41:04 – 48:32).

This shift to impartiality reflected an awareness that they were still Muslim in the classroom, and so the true and complete concealment of their faith was impossible. These limitations are expressed in the above statement by the remark "that's all you can do". The awareness of the limitations of concealment, required for an objective position, came from their own experience as RE teachers in the classroom, and so reflect the increasing awareness of the impact of their biographies on their pedagogy. In this way, these accounts bear a striking resemblance to the contention that neutrality is an 'impossible aim' (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017), but reveal the intersections as to why this is the case. This shift to impartiality also suggests that it is a natural development of their understanding of neutrality that comes from experience, realising that it is a more achievable position in the classroom than objectivity. As Jackson and Everington (2017) argue, teaching impartially is possible for 'those with strong personal commitments', by allowing for the incorporation of their faith. I would add to Jackson and Everington (2017) that impartiality also seems necessary given the ways others, notably pupils, could elicit their faith in classroom discussion from the participants' visibility as Muslims. The impact of visibility is a focus of discussion later in the chapter. For these reasons, most of the participants primarily understood neutrality as being impartial.

Criticality was also an integral dimension of the notion of neutrality. Discussions of criticality expressed a need to evaluate and contrast religious beliefs. Reference was made to the requirements of certain examination questions, and the pedagogical style of Critical Realist scholars (Barnes, 2001, 2006; Wright, 2008). For Mr Ali this was the hallmark of his practice:

> I was trained in the pedagogy called critical RE. The idea philosophically is that there is only one truth and that the truth is out there to seek. Everyone

shares their truth openly and we try to find out who is correct. So that's why I love it as an academic subject - we're trying to find out if someone says God is trinity and God is one - one of them has to be wrong, if someone says there is an afterlife and someone says there isn't there has to be an answer, there can't be both. It's not postmodern - we live in a postmodern world sometimes, there's no postmodern view about this. So, I love strong truth claims and exploring them - and when someone confidently says I totally believe - I know this is a fact, I love exploring why that is (Interview 8, 20:28 – 22:32).

Here, Mr Ali's emphasis on criticality slightly shifts the pedagogical approach of impartiality to actively appraising the commitments of the teachers and the pupils in the classroom. Most participants adopted a 'weak form' of criticality that tended to be deployed in terms of breaking stereotypes, particularly in relation to media representations, reflecting a wider synergy between the participants' faith and their work as RE teachers. However, Mr Ali's notion of criticality seems to present a stronger form that was concerned with the questioning of faith and belief itself.

This commitment to questioning faith was a divisive theme amongst the participants. Support for criticality came from the perception that it strengthened faith by providing pupils with knowledge of both critiques and possible answers to them and nurturing confidence in philosophical debate. This seemed to reflect the participants' own experiences as Muslims growing up in Britain, coming to understand their faith in their multi-faith communities. Mr Ali also felt that to be critical it was "only fair" that he also appraised his own beliefs in the classroom, "mirroring" what he expected from his pupils (Interview 8, 23:55 – 28:13). As a consequence, this opened up his own beliefs to scrutiny in the classroom.

Whilst Mr Ali relished this opportunity, others were uncomfortable with scrutinising their own beliefs in this way. For example, Miss Ahmed struggled with "questioning whether God exists":

What I have always found difficult to teach is the questioning of whether God exists. That's really, really difficult, and a difficult concept for me to teach. Because of my firm belief in the fact that there is God, and for me... its, He is everything. There would be nothing if He wasn't around. So, to question it all, to question why there is suffering in the world, but as an RE teacher I've done this so many times - why is there suffering in the world if God exists?... I would probably, y'know, ask for forgiveness before I said it from God, then I'd say it (Interview 3, 1:46:00 – 1:47:50).

Miss Ahmed's struggle is like Everington's (2014, p. 166) observation that Muslims can struggle with

these questions because they do not have this 'existential predicament' in their worldview. However, these questions also brought eschatological concerns. Miss Ahmed asks "for forgiveness" before she asks such questions, implying that these statements are in a way sinful. This is a striking observation because it reveals an eschatological dimension to RE teaching and the pedagogies that are employed. Additionally, for Miss Memon this kind of scrutiny from pupils, especially Muslim pupils, was personally challenging, leading to reflection on whether she was a "good Muslim" (Interview 15, 50:41-1:04:01). Although I discuss these eschatological concerns in more depth in Chapter 7, this is worth stating now as these kinds of feelings and tensions are not currently considered within RE's pedagogical debates. I argue that the lack of consideration of how pedagogy can interact with RE teachers' faith, specifically these eschatological concerns, is a significant oversight in these debates. There was a clear sense from the participants that being critical could compromise their personal commitments as Muslims in various ways. This raises the potential challenges that being a RE teacher brought in terms of their own faith, and, accordingly, was something that they had to come to terms with.

Others were also concerned that criticality could be aggressive toward religiously committed pupils, echoing the critiques of Ipgrave (1999) and Moulin (2015). For example, Miss Mazhar noted that:

> Like don't make a fool of the fact that you're being a devil's advocate, but genuinely believe the other side that you are putting because they have a valid point as well. I think that's a crucial thing (Interview 2, 42:10 – 43:15).

Here Miss Mazhar is aware of the potential of critical approaches to dismiss the views of pupils given the authority of the teacher, denying the reasons for their own beliefs. There is some suggestion in the data that this concern is directed toward non-religious teachers, with whom some of the participants had had conflicts with over a perceived aggression toward religion. Moreover, for some criticality brought a fear of "undermining" Muslim pupil's faith, which again elicited eschatological concerns. Following on from her above discussion of "questioning God", Miss Ahmed remarked that:

> I'm not actually saying... I'm not teaching them that, and I don't want any part of my teaching to influence someone's way of thinking like that? To bring them along those lines and to have that sort of thinking (Interview 3, 1:46:00 – 1:47:50).

Not only was there concern that their teaching could lead pupils away from God, which was seen as sinful (discussed further in Chapter 7), but also that the potential compromise of pupils' faith was also a compromise of their own desire to support faith. Thus, some participants were wary of adopting a strong critical style due to its potential impact of pupils' faith.

Discussion of the participants' understanding of neutrality has revealed several subtle orientations that they adopted toward the professional discourses in which they were situated. Whilst all maintain a boundary between the personal and professional, underpinning these orientations is an awareness that their Muslim identities would shape their engagement with this professional discourse. This could be through their bodies as visible Muslims and in a desire to maintain the integrity of their faith. Thus, their discussions of neutrality reveal that this boundary is more porous than initially thought. The temporal dimension also highlights that this awareness is developed over time, much like the development of their own identities, pointing to a potential shortcoming in the training of Muslim RE teachers that leave them unequipped with this awareness when they begin their practice.

### 5.1.3 Personal

In contrast to the neutral, the 'personal' was generally understood as the participants' Muslimness: their religious beliefs, practices, values, character, and views about the phenomena under discussion in the classroom. This was summarised by Miss Abbas as a boundary between their "life" and their "profession":

> Like what I mean is like obviously being a Muslim is like your identity, your personal identity and your life, but that doesn't need to come across in your profession, like for me anyway (Interview 11, 1:03:39 – 1:12:28).

Mrs Waheed made a similar distinction between "who they were" and "what they do":

> Yeah, well yeah, they are very different, because you deal with any person - who they are, what faith they carry, what beliefs are lifestyles they carry that's who that person is, and what profession they do, what profession they work in, again that's different (Interview 5, 57:58 – 59:38).

For Mr Shah, the 'personal' was constructed in terms of the dominant professional discourse, becoming synonymous with the confessional and the "believing":

> I think that maybe being a Muslim whilst teaching RE is with that consciousness also that I have possibly seen as representing my faith in the classroom without promoting it (Interview 13, 1:37:09 – 1:40:00).

Again, the participants' articulation of their personal identity, seen in relation to the professional, reinforced the boundary. The construction of the difference between "who they are" and "what they do" reveals the presence of two different spheres of action, each orientated toward different repertoires of meaning. This is a striking distinction given that Islam does not make such a distinction

between the sacred and profane, as the 'total social sacred' within which Muslim identities are constructed (Mellor & Shilling, 2014).

Interestingly, when asked about their Muslim identity they felt that this was one of the most difficult questions to answer. The diversity of their responses attests to the heterogeneity of the participants' self-understanding of their faith. The difficulty in answering this question also suggests that they had an awareness of this heterogeneity, with many stressing that their understanding of their faith was something unique to them. As such, there was little talk of specific beliefs or commitments that made one a Muslim, but rather a common theme was orientated toward one's personal relationship with God, and that being Muslim was something that you had to "figure out" for yourself. As Mrs Iqbal remarked:

> I think you've got to find your own way there. And I always say that to the kids when they ask me, I always say "you've got to do the research, you've got to read the books yourself until you find the right things for you" (Interview 1, 57:03 – 58:11).

These kinds of understandings are remarkably like the notions of 'spirituality' expressed by the participants in Mogra's (2009) study. Like Mogra (2009), I believe this is evidence of a notion of Muslim identity orientated around various intersecting repertoires as opposed to a fixed point of beliefs or practices. Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned the *Ummah* as a centre-point of their Muslim identity, which would evoke the sense of their faith as a super-ordinate identity. This does not mean that the *Ummah* was unimportant, but rather I would argue it begins to elucidate how these participants understood their faith in their school context as something they constructed.

Moreover, and possibly due to their awareness that I was coming to them as 'Muslim RE teachers', the way the participants spoke of their Muslim identities was intimately linked with their RE teacher identities. Evidence of this was made through suggestions that this kind of personal understanding was shaped by their work as RE teachers. Mrs Iqbal's remark is certainly reminiscent of the learning 'from' pedagogical aim of RE, which is underpinned by the commitment that one's own faith is something that you come to develop. Similarly, Miss Sumar reflected on the impact of RE teaching in the following:

> I'm sure my personal faith has been affected in some way, it has in the way I view certain things - has it got weaker I don't know, but it's just I don't feel like I can stand in front of kids and say "oh Christians are so stupid three equals one?!" I can't do that - like I might not believe in it, but I can't stand there and be like it's stupid - but I can say to the kids what's wrong, can you see any

criticisms of this? That's different (Interview 7 1:25:00 – 1:28:01).

The idea that the participants' work could develop their faith again suggests an intimate link between the two. This is a fascinating indication of a kind of 'feedback loop' between their work and their faith that goes beyond the analyses in the RE teacher literature. Possibly reflecting the instauration of a religious habitus through one's actions over a given time (see Mellor & Shilling, 2014), there was the sense that the relevance of their work as RE teachers to faith – performed day-in day-out – "rubbed off" on their understanding of themselves as Muslims. Whilst this potential cross-fertilisation of RE teaching and one's own faith is an aim for pupils, its potential implications for the faith identity of its teachers remains currently unexplored.

Denominational identification was also heterogeneous. Most participants did identify themselves as Sunni (14), but there were also those who identified as Sufi (2), Shia (2), and one Ahmadi, belonging to a tradition that is situated in a contested position in relation to the broader Muslim world. Two of the participants did not identify with any Islamic tradition, stating that they were 'cultural' and 'political' Muslims. Additionally, none of the participants made any reference to belonging to any schools of thought, although a number mentioned seeking spiritual guidance from sheikhs. The denominational heterogeneity of the participants suggests that there is no particular "kind" of Muslim that was drawn to RE teaching. In contrast, Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013, p. 19) highlights that many Muslim chaplains came from the Deobandi scholarly tradition, due to a particular confluence of historical, economic, and social circumstances. This also means that the proceeding discussion reflects the perspectives of a diverse group of Muslims, which is arguably representative of the heterogeneity of the wider Muslim demographic in Britain.

Denominational identity was important in various ways and to different degrees, however. For several Sunni participants this identity was important because they believed that their views represented the "mainstream" Muslim view. For Miss Ahmed this added a sense of legitimacy to her teaching and was a statement of how Islam should be represented in the curriculum:

> It doesn't matter whether you're a Muslim or not. Because you should teach mainstream. Like for example, like that groups really good actually - you know that [Online group] - that's really good. But you know... one of the main guys [name of teacher in the group], he is from a sect within Islam which a lot of people don't believe can be even classed as a Muslim (Interview 3, 1:10:14 – 1:12:05).

These statements reveal the intrusion of wider Muslim denominational politics through the school gates, in how the participants constructed other denominational identifications. Underpinning this

statement is a contestation between different Islamic traditions and their view of what constitutes the "facts" of Islam. Perhaps more sensitive to and invested in these inter-denominational discourses than non-Muslim RE teachers, for a number of these participants establishing the "right kind" of Islam was fundamentally important to their teaching. Often this happened to reflect their own understanding of their faith.

A sub-theme of this "mainstream" narrative was the contestation between what was "cultural" and what was "Islamic". Consider the following from Mrs Iqbal:

> I think, there are so many different denominations, and especially because of the area that I am working in there will be kids that are more cultured than religious, and so there'll be things that they disagree with, that they think I'm either too relaxed on or too different on a personal level (Interview 1, 21:51 – 24:47).

The use of "culture" versus "Islam" was a more explicit de-legitimisation of certain kinds of practices that pupils, Muslim and non-Muslim, brought to their attention. Much like in the above contestation, "culture" tended to reflect practices that these participants disagreed with. Furthermore, during my fieldwork with Mrs Khan I saw her express these views to female Muslim pupils with regards to their dress, muddying the boundary between the personal and professional (fieldnotes 16, March 2017, p. 40). This also elicited comments in relation to the representation of Islam in the curriculum, which should similarly represent "Islam" and not "culture". Thus, their Muslim identity seems to have given them some authority over how Islam is taught within their school contexts, arguably reflecting a capacity in which they could be more confessional in their teaching. This is also indicated in their pedagogy, acting as specialists through their use of 'personal life knowledge' (PLK) (Everington, 2012), which I explore in the next chapter. Furthermore, this sense of authority leads me to consider the participants as a potentially new form of religious leadership in British Muslim communities, given their capacity to shape how Islam is represented in schools and, accordingly, how they can shape the Muslimness of Muslim pupils.

Similarly, denominational identification was important for the Shia and Ahmadi participants in the study. They were keenly aware that they stood out from "mainstream" Muslim communities as well as in relation to the portrayal of Islam in the textbooks. Their sense of Muslimness was therefore shaped by these experiences of inter-denominational 'othering'. Mr Shah spoke frankly of the condemnation he received from his local Muslim community as an Ahmadi Muslim, including from the pupils that he taught (Interview 13, 6:06 – 15:02). Mr Ali expressed his frustration at the distortion of the Shia tradition from Sunni-oriented texts, which repeat wider misrepresentations

that are prevalent in his community (Interview 8, 9:43 – 13:39). As such, for these participants the wider Muslim discourses surrounding their denominational identities followed them into the classroom and shaped their experience. In this role they saw themselves as ambassadors for their denomination, in conjunction with being general role models for Muslims in the classroom.

Being Muslim was also bound up with the notion of practice. The idea of the "practicing Muslim" was employed by many participants as a benchmark for their perceived degree of religiosity, being "more" or "less Muslim" depending where they positioned themselves on the scale. Jeldtoft (2011) has similarly drawn attention to the use of the "practicing Muslim" motif as a scale of identification by 'non-practicing' Muslims. Several participants stated that it was important for them personally to be seen as Muslims in their school contexts, attesting to the continuing significance of visible markers as a way to signify Muslimness. For Miss Meer wearing the hijab to school was an important declaration of her Muslim identity:

> And I went home and I thought, okay, so these kids are thinking I'm Hindu or I'm Sikh, is that what I want them to think?… And from then, I was thinking about the idea of starting to wear a hijab, because I didn't want people to have those assumptions. I wanted people to know straight away, this is what it is, and then ask me questions about my faith from here (Interview 17, 42:20 – 47:55).

In contrast, for others being "practicing" was not integral to their understanding of their faith, but remained positioned in relation to it (see Mr Begum, Interview 14, 14:30 – 18:00).

Through the discussion of the participants' understanding of Muslimness I wish to draw attention to the heterogeneity in these accounts. I would argue that the diversity of responses means that there was no fixed way to be Muslim. Rather, the emphasis seemed to be on how they had developed their own Muslim identity in relation to the wider repertoire of Islam, and how this had been, in part, configured in light of their RE teacher identities. In the wider literature, the participants' faith is only really considered in terms of racialisation as a degree of religiosity (see for example Osler, 2003). As such, there is little illustration of a diversity of expressions of Muslimness in this literature. In the present discussion, attending to this diversity recognises their agency as Muslims in the construction of their own faith identities, which is significant in opening up the possibilities of how the participants expressed their Muslimness in their professional role.

### 5.1.4 Positioning
In the exploration of the labels participants applied to themselves I suggested that the label 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' represented the placing of their faith 'backstage' in their work,

which is supported further by the centrality of neutrality in their understanding of professionalism. The common comparison of their role to other "religious leaders" was a motif that explicitly stated this positioning, revealing their commitments and values as educators toward non-confessional RE. For example, Mr Ali felt that placing his Muslim identity first would imply he was "some kind of religious leader", at odds with his understanding of the role:

> [I'm an] RE teacher who is a Muslim, because if I put the word Muslim first it implies you're some kind of religious leader. My profession is as an RE teacher, and it doesn't matter what religion you are as a teacher, it shouldn't (Interview 8, 36:59 – 37:54).

Here a clear hierarchy of positioning is introduced in relation to his professional context that further evidences the process of putting his Muslim identity 'backstage'. For Mr Ali his profession is "an RE teacher", and this is who he is in his school context, unlike the "religious leader" who is always "Muslim first". Through this comparison they made it clear that they were not there to proselytise but simply to teach about religion, stating their values and commitments as educators. As such, this motif built upon the distinction between the "believing" personal and the neutral professional to explicitly establish the non-confessional position they were adopting in their role.

For others, neutrality was a way to deconstruct stereotypes and assumptions about their Muslim identity. There was a sense of frustration in these accounts with the over-determination of their Muslim identity, reflecting tiredness with the assumptions of others that they were there to press a religious agenda or were all-knowledgeable about their faith. Miss Meer lamented that she was tired of being approached as a "female Imam":

> I just see myself as an RE teacher. That's it. It's not a Muslim RE teacher...
> You know, stop coming to me like I'm this guru. I'm in the same boat as them, and that, sort of, puts me on par. I'm an RE teacher, like you're an RE teacher. And the Muslim part of it is simply my values part of it, you know, my personal family part of it, rather than me being this female Imam (Interview 17, 47:55 – 51:10).

As we can see here, these frustrations were expressed particularly in relation to the assumptions of the primacy of their faith that I had brought to the study in the notion of the 'Muslim RE teacher'. This is also reminiscent of the 'robotic' stereotyping of Muslims in school (Berglund, 2014), and in many ways like the experience of Christian RE teachers (Sikes & Everington, 2004), assuming that they were somehow incapable of doing RE neutrally. Again, Miss Meer makes the distinction

between the "professional" and "personal" described above, restating her position as a non-confessional RE teacher.

From this frustration and the somewhat pejorative use of the term "religious leader", I believe this motif is a powerful statement of the agentic desires of these participants as RE teachers that exist alongside, and sometimes over and above, their goals and desires as Muslims. Where the ecological approach to agency considers the achievement of agency in their contexts, here the participants seem to be achieving their agency as educators by embodying the neutral, non-confessional RE teacher position. Thus, in contrast to the Muslim leader who is "Muslim first", these participants were able, and willing, to differentiate between when they were primarily Muslim and when they wanted to occupy other positions. Specifically, in their school contexts they were non-confessional RE teachers, and they were able, as Muslims, to embody this professional position.

As such, in the main there was little sense in these accounts that they were being coerced into placing their faith backstage, because this was of value to them from their position as educators. During our interview Miss Mahmood emphasised this point:

> Yes, my professional role requires me to remain professional and I always will do, but it's not... being an RE teacher has never stopped me from practicing my belief. It's never stopped me from, you know, like maybe if you are a PE teacher, you have to show your legs off, well I mean you don't really have to show your legs, but you know if you have to do swimming or something? Well something like that you could think that's a bit awkward for me now, because I have got to do this, but being in an RE role, there isn't anything. The fact that I am never going to get offended at a child saying well, I don't think God exists, okay, because my religion is my belief, it's my choice, it's up to me (Interview 21, 38:00 – 42:25).

Miss Mahmood's agency is clearly present here - her religion is "her choice" and "her belief". Her choice to be an RE teacher is also a choice in this regard, something that she feels does not stop her from being Muslim. This sense of choice and agency is replete in their actual teaching practice, which is considered in the next chapter. This reveals their capacity to play with the codes of being Muslim and being professional to bring them together and achieve their agentic goals.

The discussion in this section draws attention to the centrality of neutrality in the construction of these participants' RE teacher identities and begins to elucidate the contestations surrounding the label 'Muslim RE teacher' previously noted. For these participants they were primarily RE teachers when they were in their school contexts. But, on the evidence outlined above, I would take this

further. I suggest that this was not seen as just a professional requirement or imposition on their Muslim identity, but rather reflected their own agency to achieve their goals as educators. This is reflected in their desire to "teach not preach", and resistance to becoming "religious leaders" in their work. However, there were limits to the extent to which the participants could embody this neutral position, to which I now turn.

## 5.2 Limits of Neutrality

Despite the centrality of the discourse of neutrality there was a clear awareness by most that they were "still Muslims" in the classroom, and that this impacted the ways in which they were able to embody the professional value of neutrality. These concerns revealed underlying religious and racialised dynamics in the construction of their teacher identities.

### 5.2.1 Racialisation

Neutrality primarily intersected with their visibility as Muslims. Processes of racialisation served to construct the participants as Muslims in school, and this framing forcibly re-positioned them from neutral to Muslim in their relationships with other pupils and staff. Mr Chowdhury spoke of his experience of being the only "brown person" in his school and local community:

> Because I've got nothing to hide. I can't un-brown myself. I'm going to be brown, so I'm evidently somebody who's different. And then, well, you know, my wife… she wears a headscarf. And, you know, they're obviously going to see my wife, because, you know, [area]'s not a very big place. And it's just everybody's going to come to know that that's [my] wife (Interview 18, 45:10 – 49:03).

Here the whiteness of his context drew out his personal identity in his teaching, meaning he could not "hide" himself, and so problematised his capacity to put his Muslim identity backstage. This shaped his subsequent teaching practice because his faith was necessarily brought into the classroom by his pupils. Because he was unable to conceal his Muslim identity this meant he had to develop pedagogical strategies to be neutral in different ways, in this case incorporating his own experiences into his teaching impartially as a resource for discussion. Given that many of the participants were the only Muslim members of staff in their schools, racialisation generally served to disrupt the capacity in which they could be neutral and embody the dominant professional discourse within which they were trying to situate themselves.

The process of racialisation was also distinctly gendered, with the hijab at the centre of these concerns. Those who wore the hijab spoke of being "obviously" Muslim at the front of the classroom, and so, by embodying their faith visibly, they necessarily brought this with them into

their teacher identity. As Miss Loonat put, her identity as an "in your face Muslim" by wearing the hijab meant she had to share her identity:

> Erm... I think you'd have to 'cuz like [other teacher] is like an atheist but he doesn't say that he's an atheist, but I'm kinda in your face I'm a Muslim. So, you have to like - and like I know part of the role is by you not telling the kids your religion, y'know indoctrinating them 'n' all that, but you kinda can't hide it with being a Muslim (Interview 10.2, 4:00 – 6:53).

Again, the visibility of the hijab problematised the participants' capacity to conceal their Muslim identity and be neutral. But the juxtaposition with the atheist teacher here particularly draws attention to the whiteness of the discourse of neutrality itself. In a way, neutrality is the privilege of the white teacher who can hide their personal identity. In contrast, wearing the hijab was seen to preclude them from being able to embody this dominant professional position to a certain extent. As has been highlighted in the BME literature, the hijab therefore potentially became a site of conflict between embodying their faith and notions of professionalism, between the 'good Muslim' and the 'good teacher' (Benn et al., 2011). Potential tensions with notions of professionalism were an undercurrent within these discussions, encapsulated in the participants' accounts of the specific moments when they decided to wear the hijab at work.

These accounts draw attention to the embodiment of 'race', religion, and gender, and how they intersect with the notion of neutrality, incidentally highlighting the whiteness of the concept. There was an assumption that being visibly Muslim would complicate their embodiment of their professional role as neutral RE teachers. For instance, the popular tactic of simply concealing religious commitments from pupils amongst RE teachers was often not available to these participants, given their construction as Muslims by others based on their visible Muslimness. Where Elbaz's (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007; Elbaz, 1983; Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003) work has drawn attention to the 'terrors' of performativity and the presence of the teacher's body, the participants expressed similar challenges in their non-confessional teaching. This has implications for the professional discourses and pedagogies of RE, as it may be harder for religious individuals who are 'hypervisible' to manage neutrality, in terms of their construction by others.

The effects of racialisation on the construction of teacher identity is perhaps exemplified by the "outing" of Mr Jones. As a white male Muslim convert working as an RE teacher in a predominantly white environment, Mr Jones had effectively hidden his Muslim identity completely from other staff and pupils in his school. He had decided to hide his Muslim identity so that others would "get to

know him" as a person before him as a Muslim (Interview 6, 33:38 – 36:20). However, he spoke of being "outed" as a Muslim:

> Well I mean I outed myself to my HoD just because I needed to pray quite a
> lot, and he - but for quite a long time I didn't y'know. I think I was caught
> praying behind the bike shed - not the bike shed it was actually a PE shed - by
> one of the PE staff. So y'know it was a kind of an open secret. But I felt very
> wary of kind of saying that I was Muslim. Partly sort of for personal safety -
> that overblows it, nothing physical - feeling physically unsafe - but knowing
> that - I think that's it knowing that certain assumptions would be made about
> me and so I wanted to establish myself in the school (Interview 6, 39:06 –
> 44:23).

It is interesting here that Mr Jones became "outed" as a Muslim purely through prayer, lending support to racialisation as a process of construction through various visible markers. Echoing the literature, ritual practice was therefore another sphere of action which elicited their Muslim identity. The impact of these practices is considered further in the next chapter. It is also worth noting that Mr Jones expected this reaction even though he was newly converted at the time of this event. This attests to the pervasiveness of such racialised constructions within teaching. After his "outing", Mr Jones spoke of being reduced to his Muslim identity by other staff, much to his frustration, as he recalled in the following incident:

> They're seeing me through that lens. There was a house singing competition
> where these teenagers - pre-16 teenagers, were singing the song 'Timber'.
> The lyrics are just extraordinary - basically it's about sexual violence really, it's
> certainly about male supremacy over women, and so I was so furious I nearly
> switched off the blinking thing in the middle of the set - thank God I didn't
> manage to - I went to the deputy head in charge and said this is completely
> outrageous, and apparently when it went to SLT the head's reaction was
> wrong  - "Oh we're not having any religious considerations here". So you see
> everything - I can never escape being a Muslim - I'm never just a teacher... Its
> enormously frustrating. Which is why I think I would play it differently in a new
> school, because again even if everybody knows - I dunno maybe there's just
> no escaping it? (Interview 6, 44:23 – 48:30).

As suggested in the literature, Mr Jones's subsequent construction as Muslim caused tensions with other staff with regards to his professionalism. In this way, racialisation caused a clear denial of his agency by forcing him into the Muslim position, even when, as in this instance, he was speaking from

the perspective of a concerned teacher. As Mr Jones, laments he can now "never escape being a Muslim" in the eyes of his SLT.

These accounts of racialisation seem to encapsulate the denial of agency that Muslim teachers experience through their use of tactics such as 'identity stasis', and the denial of their Muslim identity to avoid stereotyping and conflict (Benn, 1998). However, Mr Jones' account shows this tactic to be ineffective. The account of 'identity stasis' in the literature misses that no matter how much he might want to put his Muslimness into stasis, others will not allow him to do so. Its presentation as something that Muslims always reluctantly do to avoid conflict misses the possibility that, in some instances, placing their Muslim identity into stasis is something that they may actually desire to do, on the basis of their own professional values. In this case, the racialisation that the literature argues puts pressure on Muslims to move their faith identity into stasis, is the very thing that prevents them from doing so, actually denying their agency as RE teachers by over-determining their Muslimness.

Mr Jones's lamentation that he can "never escape being Muslim" illustrates a denial of his agency as an RE teacher in his reduction to his Muslim identity. This resembles the prior frustrations of the participants' reduction to "religious leaders", assuming the constant primacy of their Muslim identity in their teaching practice and decision making. Thus, being constructed as Muslim seemed to fix the participants within an imagined religious frame, bringing with it the expectations that they were going to act a certain way and that religious reasoning would underpin their thinking. In the case of Miss Loonat, there was an assumption by pupils that she was there to indoctrinate, which is also noted in Benn's (1998, pp. 127-128) thesis. This also reflected the assumed conflict experienced by Mr Jones between 'secular' and Muslim leadership values that is pervasive in the wider BME literature (see Shah, 2016). Yet the effect of racialisation from the perspective of agency has been rarely considered in terms of Muslim teachers.

The agentic perspective is significant because it also incorporates the conflation of the participants' religious and professional identity-attributes by Muslim pupils, and the subsequent religious expectations placed on them. Their arguable racialisation by Muslim pupils was a significant challenge that many of the participants faced. Miss Memon faced considerable scrutiny from her Muslim pupils who knew her faith:

> I think, like for instance during the lesson, like I said before, some students will say to me like during the lesson "Oh Miss are you a Muslim?" And I would be like yes and that's it… But the boundaries will lie when they start asking me during the lesson random things like "Oh Miss do you believe in this about our

religion?". "Oh Miss do you agree with this about our religion?". I'm not going to go into that because of firstly is got nothing to do with the religion, I mean not religion the lesson, and that's not really any of their business what I… I'm not going to go that personally into religion because I know what the students wanted - they wanted like a debate about the religion, like they would go "Oh you don't celebrate the Prophet's birthday why don't you, are you are *wahabbi* now?", and things like that. And that's what they wanted. So that's why I don't answer the questions (Interview 15, 50:41-1:04:01).

In this account Miss Memon struggles to maintain her neutral stance against the interrogation of her pupils, who keep invoking her Muslim identity. Her feelings about these pressures were likely intensified by her lack of experience as an NQT, unused to dealing with this kind of questioning. In this way, her construction as Muslim serves to deny her agency as an RE teacher by preventing her from adopting this position. As a result, she then becomes subject to their religious expectations. These questions caused considerable distress for Miss Memon who feared that her pupils saw her as a "bad Muslim" for what she believed (Interview 15, 50:41-1:04:01). Similar tensions have been noted in Everington's (2014, 2015) work, where participants feared perpetuating a 'Muslim bubble' in the classroom by sharing their own beliefs.

Moreover, other participants made reference to judgements from their wider Muslim community about their work. Miss Sumar was accused by a Muslim trainee that she was "too objective, how can you speak about Shia Islam like that?" (Interview 7, 1:20:21 – 1:25:00). Mr Ali remarked about the expectations that Muslim parents had put on him to "nurture their child in a spiritual way" (Interview 8, 1:00:09 – 1:02:19). In fact, the motif of "I'm teaching not preaching" was in part used to allay the concerns of other Muslims, as Miss Mahmood stated:

You see my friend mentioned that as well, she is a Muslim, and she is also an RE teacher and she is like "I have to be like all right that we are teaching about other religions being Muslim", and I was like, well what you have got to understand is, we have got to teach all the religions, but we are not believing in it (Interview 21, 49:20 – 53:01).

These tensions surrounding the views of other Muslims reveals a conflation of their Muslim and RE teacher positions that the participants actively resisted in their own teacher identity construction. This is encapsulated in the use of the "I'm teaching not preaching" motif to allay these concerns. Such a conflation shifts them into the 'Muslim RE teacher' position, fixing them to the perspective of their beliefs, and so seemingly prohibiting them from engaging in various discussions from the diverse vantage points that they adopt in the milieu of the classroom. Their racialisation in this sense

denies them their capacity to achieve their agency as educators, who seek to teach and engage with topics from these various positions.

I would argue that this notion of racialisation as a conflation of religion from the perspective of Muslim pupils is a hidden yet significant aspect of the work of Muslim teachers more widely. Although there are allusions to such dynamics in the literature, notably in Everington's (2014, 2015) work, the focus on notions of whiteness possibly reveals a lacuna in the scholarly gaze toward racialisation. I suggest that further empirical enquiry into the construction of Muslim teachers by Muslim pupils could be a fruitful avenue of research to potentially expand the notions of racialisation and 'identity stasis' in this way. For example, there is emerging research surrounding inter-Muslim racism that is expanding the meaning of these terms (Hekmoun, 2017). Going onto discussions of pedagogy and role models in the next chapter, these inter-Muslim constructions have important implications for both, particularly given the pervasiveness of the role model argument in the experience of BME teachers in the literature.

However, these challenges were not seen as insurmountable. As I go on to discuss in Chapter 6, the participants had developed innovative pedagogical strategies within which to incorporate and manage the shifts in footing that their racialisation provoked. Thus, there was a sense that these were practical challenges rather than a more fundamental denial of their Muslim way of life. It is also important to remember that, as Miss Mahmood stated earlier, the general consensus was that being an RE teacher did not preclude the participants from being Muslim in their school contexts. This perspective problematises the notion of 'identity stasis' as it is seemingly a denial of their Muslim agency without regard to their agency as teachers in this respect.

### 5.2.2 *Prevent* and FBVs

At this juncture it is worth mentioning *Prevent* and FBVs in relation to the present discussion on the denial of agency. The *Prevent* policy assemblage has been seen as the manifestation of anti-Muslim racialised politics in schooling, constructing Muslimness as a threat to British values (Miah, 2016, 2017). As such, *Prevent* and FBVs serve to deny Muslims their capacity to be Muslim in school by securitising the Muslim body as a threat.

Given the linkages between RE, *Prevent*, and FBVs, it would seem that these policies would have been extremely problematic for these participants as visibly Muslim RE teachers. It is striking to note therefore that *Prevent* was rarely commented upon in the participants' accounts, and there was little suggestion that it was a barrier to the incorporation of their Muslim identity.[16] Within the interview schedule, discussion of these policies was an explicit question, but the question was

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[16] In the Introduction I have discussed the potential impact of my positionality with regard to these discussions.

prefaced with a discussion of any problematic policies of teaching more generally. Positioned within the broader policy landscape of teaching, the participants mentioned that the day-to-day issues with workload and the new content heavy GCSE were generally more problematic. When prompted about *Prevent*, they tended to refer to it as just another policy that they had to attend to, especially in relation to their wider safeguarding remit. Mrs Ibrahim, an openly 'Muslim RE teacher', spoke of the following:

> But *Prevent* in all honesty in this school it's not the be all and end all, they put it into perspective which is good, because they are lucky in a sense that we have so many Muslim children so they can actually see that it doesn't affect the majority of children. So, they have got it into perspective… So yes, we do things that we have to do by law - we have to do them, but we are sensible about it in school (Interview 4, 1:03:55 – 1:07:35).

By locating *Prevent* and FBVs within their pre-existing work the participants seemed to have developed 'narratives of continuity' about its function (Busher et al., 2017, p. 32). Busher et al. (2017, p. 65) suggest that such narratives possibly reflect an ambiguity from teachers toward its impact. Whilst BME teachers were wary of possible stigmatisation of Muslim pupils, most did not consider it to have had an impact on their identity (2017, p. 65). Thus, as they conclude (2017, p. 66), *Prevent* and FBVs seemed to 'make sense' to these teachers in their day-to-day work.

In contrast to *Prevent*, FBVs were generally seen as more problematic in a way which largely echoes the existing literature. Participants drew attention to the stereotyping and media portrayals of Muslims that it was seemingly positioned against. Some referred to a "liberalising agenda" (see Interview 6, 52:52 – 1:01:14). Others problematised the idea that these values were exclusively 'British', echoing Farrell's (2016) work (see Interview 5, 33:26 – 35:25). There also were allusions to a more insidious "thought policing" that FBVs promoted, as Miss Sumar explained:

> It makes you think about opinions. Like I guess because of the way I dress some kids think that - I am a conservative Muslim, I think drinking alcohol is wrong, I think premarital relations is wrong, that sort of stuff, just your general average Muslim, in that sense. So, I do get kids ask, "Oh Miss is it wrong to have a boyfriend?". And I'm just like I don't know how to answer because do I give a personal view or? I'm just like... Like in the past I would just joke and go "y'know what Islam says but it's your call", but now I would be hesitant to even say that as a joke because you don't know - someone could take that as enforcing your own values, so even though I'd say it as a joke I wouldn't do it (Interview 7, 1:17:13 – 1:18:29).

Thus, as Farrell (2016, p. 294) argues, the participants accounts' do suggest that FBVs have created a 'constitutive "outside"' in the values of the RE teacher in terms of a British normativity. Tasked with having to embody this Britishness in their role, their own beliefs as Muslims had the potential to be alienated as 'unBritish'. This precariousness is exacerbated by their hypervisibility, constructing them immediately outside the normality of Britishness in the eyes of others and leading to the questioning of their values.

In light of these discussions, it is therefore difficult to ascertain the extent to which *Prevent* and FBVs impacted these participants' RE teacher identities. There was support, ambiguity, and criticism toward these initiatives, which I intend to unpick in a later paper. For the present discussion, I tentatively argue that these policies did have an impact in the way Miss Sumar alluded to, as a kind of "thought policing" that denied them from expressing certain 'traditional' views. As I go on to discuss in Chapter 7, these tensions became explicit with regard to teaching about homosexuality. However, there was a general lack of contestation from the participants about *Prevent* and FBVs, suggesting that they had developed 'narratives of continuity' about its function (Busher et al., 2017). This perception could also be a symptom of their wider identity work, as they are already engaged with managing and concealing their beliefs as part of their role, so the effects of *Prevent* are not so dissimilar to that of their professional identity construction. There could also be an overlap between the values of FBVs and the participants' understanding of RE as a force for social cohesion, which was an important aspect of their work (see Moulin, 2012). This raises an intriguing intersection between the specific subject that Muslim teachers teach and the impact of the *Prevent* assemblage, which warrants further investigation.

### 5.2.3 Faith

Participants did also express religious limits to neutrality within the broader auspices of their work. These concerns were reminiscent of that found in the literature of a fear of 'compromising' the integrity of their faith. With regards to RE, the participants made reference to various topics that they found challenging to remain neutral on. Recurring themes were the concept of the Trinity and teaching about Hinduism, which for some were far outside their own understanding of religion. Mrs Iqbal remarked on this discomfort:

> No, not anymore... I think I felt a little bit uncomfortable... Not uncomfortable, not as confident when I first started teaching. Particularly with Hinduism I struggled a bit more with. I've just finished looking at Hinduism and its more when you look at the deities. No, and I'm just like, and I always say this to the students, like we're going to see videos and pictures of things that are totally different from things what you would ever believe in, but that's someone's

belief and you just see past it and you just learn about it and we move on
(Interview 1, 31:50 – 32:52).

Her strategy of "seeing past it" and "just moving on" speaks of the limits in which she was able to countenance this in the classroom personally. This simple tactic of avoidance also suggests that there was no clear solution to this tension. However, the neutral space seems to offer her some recourse, allowing her to retreat into the role of the non-confessional teacher to maintain the integrity of her faith. Similarly, teaching about homosexuality was consistently raised as a problematic topic to teach, with the above concerns exacerbated by the threat of transgressing FBVs and other Equality and Diversity legislation. This is discussed further in Chapter 7, but for now it is again worth highlighting the potential eschatological tensions of their work as a limit to their neutrality, and so shaping the construction of their teacher identity.

Others drew attention to the limits in which they could appear neutral due to their underlying values and commitments, reflecting awareness of the unique ontological position of RE in relation to teachers (see Freathy et al., 2016b). As noted earlier, Mr Ali felt that sharing his beliefs was "only fair" if it was required of the pupils. Miss Memon also stated above that she felt she should share that she was a Muslim to maintain the integrity of her faith. For others, like Mrs Ibrahim, their positioning as role models for Muslim pupils created a sense that they should express their shared faith in some capacity, evoking notions of the *Ummah* (Interview 4.1, 15:42 – 17:00). Whilst not necessarily because of faith, their underlying values and commitments shaped their teacher identity. The inclusion of themselves in this way shapes how they are neutral and created the possibility of moments when they should not be neutral.

Many also spoke of their performance and observation of Islamic ritual as something which they would not compromise, referring to the wider social contexts of their schools. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, but again it is worth highlighting how these visible practices in a way inhibited their neutral image. A particular site of tension was that of abstaining from alcohol, echoing the findings in the wider literature. Many participants spoke of the potentially damaging effects that abstaining from alcohol had on their social life and careers as teachers, such as Miss Mazhar:

> Yeah like I've mentioned alcohol and not doing drugs and stuff like that,
> actually it makes a huge difference. Like with my colleagues they're like "oh
> you're not drinking" and stuff, and like if we are out on a Friday and there sat
> with wine and they'll be like "oh you've never tried it why don't you try it", I think
> because I see them every day and it's a large part of English culture (Interview

2, 26:10 -27:34).

As Miss Mazhar recounts, her abstention constructed her as the 'other' from the norm of the teacher in her working environment, and from "English culture" more widely. As this was something she would not compromise on, abstention from alcohol was a decision at the expense of her complicity toward these wider social teaching norms. Alcohol therefore reflected a significant site of resistance in the participants' construction of their teacher identities from a faith perspective, acting against the dominant pressures of wider teaching culture. In response, it also provoked a plethora of issues relating to racialisation and racism, eliciting overt and micro-aggressive remarks from other staff, as Miss Mazhar notes above. As such, the participants' agency and attributes as Muslims could be enacted and evoked in their resistance to their wider professional expectations.

This was more explicit in the case of 'Muslim RE teachers', who explicitly resisted the professional discourse of neutrality itself. As I noted at the start of this chapter, a small number of participants did contest the primacy of the neutral RE teacher. They stressed the continuing primacy of their Muslim identity and accepted my initial label of 'Muslim RE teachers'. For example, during the interview Mrs Iqbal stated that she was "always a Muslim first":

> No I'm a Muslim first, I'm always a Muslim first. But I'm a teacher - I don't even see myself as an RE teacher I see myself as a teacher y'know, I've had to teach other things - I've taught food technology over the years, history, geography, PSHE... But yes RE essentially (Interview 4.2 1:33:28 – 1:34:07).

This perspective inflected the accounts of the other participants, revealing instances where their RE teacher identities were constructed in terms of their Islamic repertoire of meaning-making. Although they did still engage in similar identity work to be neutral, reflecting the power of this professional discourse, their accounts can be understood as a desire to attend to their agency as Muslims, typically to maintain the integrity of their faith and meet their spiritual needs in their working life.

Consequently, if the support for neutrality reflected their agency as educators, I suggest that these resistances can be understood as an acknowledgement of their agency as Muslims. Much as achieving neutrality reflected their agency as educators, their incorporation of Muslimness was how the participants achieved their agency as Muslims in the role. The discussion of the limits of neutrality also reveals how their agency as both Muslims and RE teachers can be denied in various ways, typically through their construction as Muslim by others. It also highlights how their agency is iterational, reflecting both their personal and professional lives. A large part of the construction and maintenance of their teacher identity, then, is concerned with how they can be both Muslims and RE teachers in their work. These concerns underpinned much of their actual teaching practice, to which

I now turn.

## 5.3 Concluding Reflections

In this chapter I have explored the ways the participants, in the main, understood and constructed their identities as 'RE teachers who happen to be Muslim', instead of 'Muslim RE teachers'. There are four aspects of the present chapter that I wish to draw attention to going forward.

Firstly, I argue that these narratives demonstrate that, in their school contexts, the participants did not generally seem to construct themselves as 'Muslim first'. The common contestation of the label 'Muslim RE teacher', and subsequent expression of other labels, questions the primacy of their Muslim identity-attribute. Although there were a small number of self-identifying 'Muslim RE teachers', they still engaged in the same identity work as the other participants to construct themselves as neutral, albeit arguably to a lesser degree. This has led to the development of a continuum of configurations of their identities, which centred around three labels (see Figure 5.1).

Through an exploration of their notions of professionalism and identification of the centrality of neutrality in this understanding, I found that at the core of their RE teacher identity was the construction of a boundary between their personal Muslim identity and their professional teacher role. Through the construction of this boundary, the participants positioned their Muslim identity backstage to embody a neutral 'frontstage' teacher identity. Therefore, by contesting the notion of 'Muslim first', the participants' narratives problematise the notion of the 'Muslim teacher' used throughout the literature, which I have argued rests on this assumption. The implications of these findings are considered in the Discussion.

I then moved on to consider how the intersections of 'race', religion, and gender impacted on this neutral positioning. It was revealed that these intersections served to disrupt the participants' attempts to be neutral by forcibly shifting their framing to their Muslim identity. Processes of racialisation, for example, meant that they were visibly Muslim on the classroom stage, and so the pupils constructed them as such in their relationships. I have also drawn attention to the subtle impact of their own faith as providing a limit to the extent to which they could be neutral. This discussion supports many of the findings in previous studies surrounding the impact of racism and 'secular' notions of the teacher on processes of identity construction for Muslim teachers. However, these processes did not just deny them from being Muslim, but also in some instances denied them the capacity to be neutral RE teachers.

The participants general orientation around the notion of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim', similar to Mogra's (2009) study, seems to suggest a sophisticated and fluid relationship

between their faith and their professional role. This is evidenced by the clear commitment to RE teaching throughout and the general sense that their work as RE teachers did not prevent them from being Muslim. Yet this seems to be in direct contrast to the prevailing understanding in the literature. Therefore, I posit that understanding these narratives from the perspective of their agency as social actors reveals their capacity to be both Muslim *and* RE teachers. As Priestley et al. (2015, p. 31) suggest, agency involves both the personal and professional. Their constructions reflect this iterational dimension, expressing their values and aims as Muslims and as educators in various capacities, and the possibilities of achieving both in their work. By attending to their agency as both RE teachers *and* as Muslims, rather than just their agency as Muslims, the present analysis has been able to articulate how they have weaved together what have been seen as contradictory repertoires of meaning-making through complex identity work. As such, there does not seem to be such a strong dichotomy between 'secular' teaching and Muslimness that previous analyses suggest. Their agency as Muslims overlapped with their understanding of themselves as RE teachers in various ways. So, whilst they were not 'Muslim first' in most cases, this did not entail that their Muslim identity was completely absent or positioned in 'identity stasis', but rather illustrates a sense of coherence between these two attributes that the participants had constructed. These insights provide significant nuance to the concept of the 'Muslim teacher'. It also problematises concepts such as 'identity stasis', which seemingly preclude Muslim teachers from putting their faith 'backstage' willingly on the basis of their professional values. I claim drawing attention to this sense of coherence highlights the capacity for Muslims to incorporate their faith within 'secular' frameworks, building upon the findings of Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013) and Essers and Benschop (2009). In the Discussion, this leads me to argue that the notion of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' is a significant statement of an emerging narrative of British Muslim identity that is moving away from 'Muslim first' or 'just Muslim', to identities of 'Muslim who can'.

Further nuance is suggested by attending to the projective dimension of their agency. Their experience and incorporation of Muslimness seems to have a distinct temporal dimension that matched their growing efficacy and confidence as educators. As the participants moved beyond the formative stage of their careers they became more comfortable with adapting their role to fit their spiritual needs, and shaped their understanding to incorporate the values and commitments of their faith. This is explored further in the proceeding chapter. For the moment, this temporal dimension is interesting to put into conversation with the wider literature, which has tended to focus on Muslim and RE ITTs (likely due to ease of access). By focussing on the experiences of teachers at the earliest stages of their careers, the literature has largely focussed on actors who are still learning the basics of their craft. This research then misses the perspectives of more established practitioners, who

have had time to reflect in more depth on matters of their identity construction, and have gained enough confidence to begin to play with the frameworks in which they are situated. In my experience, more experienced teachers seem to set less store by policies and initiatives, having seen so many come and go over the course of their careers. They are perceived as transient compared to the everyday "bread and butter" of their own teaching, which they know works for them. Within RE, this awareness could extend to the discourse of neutrality, and the anxieties surrounding including one's own faith in the classroom. Although there has been suggestion that such rigid frameworks represent whiteness (Bariso, 2001; Wilkins, 2014), I suggest that considering Muslim and RE teachers at later stages in their careers could perhaps reveal narratives and tactics that can support ITTs. Certainly, as is the case here, the more experienced participants had developed ways of understanding their Muslim identity in terms of their role as the RE teacher, and *vice versa*.

The capacity for these participants to achieve their agency as Muslims and as RE teachers in their school contexts is taken forward into the next chapter. I consider how this identity work was achieved in practice. In doing so, I build upon the complex identity work discussed here toward a bricologic sense of identity, highlighting the capacity for the participants to play with the codes of both repertoires to achieve their agentic goals.

# Chapter 6: Identity Work, Boundary-Work, and Practice

In the previous chapter I explored the participants' construction of their teacher identity. Through this exploration, it was revealed that the notions of professionalism centred on a commitment to being neutral that resulted in the construction of a boundary between their faith and their professional role. This was encapsulated in the contestation of the primacy of their Muslim identity-attribute implied by the label 'Muslim RE teacher', a general preference to be understood as 'RE teachers who happen to be Muslim' – symbolic of their placing of their faith identity backstage in their construction. In turn, this revealed how they had constructed their Muslim identities within the professional framework of the RE teacher, attesting to their agency as both Muslims *and* as RE teachers.

This more nuanced conceptualisation of the agency of Muslim actors facilitates the discussion in the present chapter, which considers how they constructed and managed these aspects of their identity in their practice. This discussion attends to the second research question:

## 2. *How did this identity work occur in practice?*

The following analysis explores three major sites of practice within these participants' working lives within their school contexts. The first is their pedagogical practice - exploring their actual teaching strategies in the classroom. The second is their role as role models, particularly for Muslim pupils. Finally, I turn to ritual practice, attending to the extent to which they could practice their faith, which, in the previous chapter and within the literature, has been identified as an important aspect in the construction of Muslimness.

Exploring aspects of practice not only expands the previous claims surrounding their agency and their capacity to achieve both the personal and professional, but also draws attention to the fluidity and pragmatism in which these participants approached their teacher identity. Utilising Essers and Benschop's (2009) concept of 'boundary-work' and Goffman's (1959, 1974, 1979) metaphors of 'framing' and 'footing', here I draw attention to the participants' capacity to be both Muslims and RE teachers in their practice, by occupying different frames at different times and in different spaces. This was achieved by constantly changing footings to bring their Muslim identity to the frontstage and back again, as well as blurring the boundaries themselves. This capacity to play with these attributes and embody their faith in a way which is consonant with a 'secularly' constructed public role, leads me toward a bricologic understanding of these participants' identities.

## 6.0 Boundary-Work, Framing, and footing.

In the Literature Review I made reference to scholarship that has highlighted the capacity of religious actors to incorporate their faith into the frameworks of 'secular' institutions. Specifically, Essers and Benschop (2009) draw attention to the boundary-work that female Muslim entrepreneurs engaged in to manage the seemingly oppositional demands of their faith and role (2009, p. 405). They write that this boundary-work is evidence of the simultaneity of multiple, intersecting attributes in the workplace:

> This kind of identity work shows that identity construction in the context of entrepreneurship is complicated when multiple social categories are involved in the construction of work identities, and that the simultaneity of these categories results in both restrictions and possibilities (2009, p. 405).

The boundary-work that these women engaged in involved renegotiating how they understood themselves as women, Muslims, and entrepreneurs, weaving these frameworks together (2009, p. 405). As a result, this created new spaces for being within their working contexts, and new understandings of themselves as women, Muslims, and entrepreneurs. Similarly, Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013) have posited that Muslim chaplains represent a 'new category of religious actor' in their capacity to articulate an Islamic approach to chaplaincy within the policy frameworks of British public institutions, such as the NHS and HM Prison Service. This concept of boundary-work underpins the discussion within this chapter.

Furthermore, I use Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor to help articulate the performance of this boundary-work. Again, as established in the Literature Review, this metaphor has been a powerful analytical lens in which to consider teacher performativity. As Wine (2008, p. 1) summarises, the concepts of framing, footing, and alignment 'provide a powerful lens for examining social roles, how they are signalled, and how speakers position themselves vis-à-vis one another during interactions'. As the notion of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' was constructed in relation to the expectations of a 'professional knowledge landscape', the other actors in their school contexts, and their religious repertoire of meanings, these concepts allow for the analysis of how these positions were established in the micro-level of practice.

The concept of a 'frame' reflects the 'structures of expectations' that afford actors rights and obligations by occupying a social role (Goffman 1974). For Lakoff (2004, p. xv cited in Wine 2008, p. 4), these frames are 'mental structures' which shape how we speak and act, and what agentic goals we are pursuing through those actions. As actors occupy multiple social positions at any given time, they occupy multiple 'framespaces', which afford them different rights and expectations within a

given situation (1974, p. 151). In the present analysis, these frames can be understood as the repertoires of meaning making from which these participants are constructing their identities: their 'Muslim' and 'RE teacher' repertoires.

'Footing' reflects the current framespace which an actor occupies, and so the current expectations within which they are operating. Through this, Goffman (1974) highlights how actors shift footings, or how their footings are shifted by others, to occupy new framespaces within social situations, reconfiguring the social interaction within that situation, and the expectations of the actors involved. These often involve a projection of a shift in footing, or 'code-switching', to signal to other actors the new frame which one is inhabiting (Goffman 1979). Thus, the present analysis looked for how the participants signalled switches between the above frames.

In contrast, the concept of alignment considers the ways in which actors act according to the acceptable parameters of a given framespace and maintain the frame they are inhabiting. Their degree of alignment reflects the 'synchronisation' between their behaviour: speech, actions, awareness of the situation, and the accepted discourse of the frame' (Wine 2008). Given our multiple social positions, actors therefore inhabit multiple 'framespaces' at any given time, and these other 'backstage' framespaces do not simply disappear, but must be 'held in abeyance' whilst other framespaces are inhabited (1979, p. 151). Thus, aligning oneself with a frame is a sign of acceptance of these behaviours, and, as a consequence, reflect the actor's agency in acting according to the frame (Wine 2008).

Together, the concepts of framing, footing, and alignment allowed me to consider how the participants actually performed their Muslim and RE teacher identities on the 'classroom stage'. Such an approach has been useful in eliciting the extent to which 'black' bodies are accepted within teaching (Bariso, 2001; Benn et al., 2011; Bhopal, 2015). Similarly, the present analysis sheds further empirical light on these participants' identities.


## 6.1 Pedagogy

Given the importance of maintaining the personal and professional boundary in the participants' understanding of their teacher professionalism, boundary-work was a fundamental part of the participants' teaching practice. All of the participants had developed pedagogical strategies, often *ad hoc*, to manage the shifting positions, or footings, within which they were situated in the classroom.

### 6.1.1 Code-Switching

Lin (2008) notes that teacher research has highlighted the use of code-switching by teachers to constantly reposition themselves in relation to the social milieu of the classroom. Similarly, code-switching was an integral part of the participants' pedagogy, signalling to their pupils which frame they were adopting in a given moment. Specifically, they engaged in code-switching to signal when they were talking from a neutral perspective, and when they were talking from a personal faith perspective. This involved paying close attention to their 'teacher talk', centring on the use of "Muslim" to signal a neutral position and "we" or "I" for a personal position. The development of this code was a formative moment in the participants' careers:

> The fact that, since I started teaching, I always knew I was teaching their religion, like in the example, you say, a Christian would say, a Muslim would say? That's the way I will teach (Miss Mahmood, Interview 21, 49:20 – 53:01).

> I remember when I was doing my PGCE…  And I remember my mentor she said to me, "you know what you said 'we', as in 'we do that', as in Muslim", and it must of been a slip of the tongue, and I was new to teaching, and that just stuck in my head - I said I'm NEVER ever going to do that again (Miss Ahmed, Interview 3, 42:00 – 43:52).

The code itself: "Muslim" or "I" is a clear signal of the different underlying commitments, or frames, of their 'teacher talk' in that given moment. In this way, code-switching facilitated their nuanced understandings of neutrality, as impartiality and criticality, by allowing the participants to "be" different people at various points of their teaching, and so to present various positions in class. Through the utterance of "Muslim", the participant was portraying a view of Muslims as constructed from their academic perspective and the 'professional knowledge landscape' of the curriculum content. The use of the factual term is symbolic of their distancing of themselves as neutral RE teachers from their personal faith repertoire of meaning-making. In contrast, the switch to "I" invokes the faith repertoire, bringing with it the expectations to "be Muslim" in that moment.

As such, the use of this code-switching seemed to be primarily employed as a way of maintaining the boundary between the personal and professional, and the positioning of their backstage and frontstage identities. For example, code-switching was predominantly employed in response to pupils' questions ("Miss, what do you think?") which forced a shift in footing from the neutral to the personal, with the use of "I" or "Muslims" used to accept or resist the shift. This was significant given the participants' visibility as Muslims, affording them some control in the social milieu of the classroom as way to maintain their alignment with their frontstage neutral teacher identity.

It was also used to "protect" their Muslim identity in discussions that they may have disagreed with from a faith perspective. For example, Miss Meer stated that:

> Even when I teach Islam, I teach it as, this is what Muslims believe, this is what
> they believe, not this is what I believe, because there are some of those beliefs,
> as a Muslim, that I don't agree with even though I know, within the community,
> I wouldn't really be praised for saying that (Interview 17, 1:04:04 – 1:07:38).

This reveals an interesting facet of the concept of neutrality that has otherwise been ignored. It is an ontological space which the participants could retreat to in order to maintain the integrity of their faith. The wider literature has been highly critical of the 'secular' shape that the discourse of neutrality forms (Bryan, 2012; Bryan & Revell, 2011; Cooling, 2010; Copley, 2005). But here, the ability to maintain a neutral footing in moments when discussion turned to something at odds with the participants' own faith afforded them the capacity not to be bound by these obligations in that moment. Thus, the shift in footing allowed the participants to say things that they would otherwise not be able to from their Muslim position, allowing them to maintain the integrity of their faith when teaching perspectives that they disagreed with, or when their viewpoint would conflict with other Muslims within their local community. The significance of this pedagogical strategy in the experience of these participants is revisited in Chapter 7 where tensions are considered.

It also appears to be used to convey a sense of legitimacy by emphasising the "accuracy" of their statements. The use of "we" or "I" revealed an interesting tension underlying the expectations of their Muslim identity. The teachers were generally very wary of using "we" because they did not want to convey their beliefs as the "correct" beliefs. This wariness reflected not only an awareness of the heterogeneity of Muslims, as in the quote above, but also a wariness toward the expectations of their Muslim pupils. For Mr Ali this was a key concern:

> So I never say we believe this – I say I believe this, but it's up to you, so I don't
> want it to be like "we Muslims" – yeah we share the faith but this is my opinion,
> and I don't want you to think because I think that, 'cos sometimes you have to
> be cautious – "Sir, what do we think about this?" (Interview 8, 23:55 – 28:13).

Similarly, during my observations of revision lessons with Miss Aziz (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 14), she employed code-switching to demarcate between her view – "I believe" - and the 'textbook' view – "Muslims believe". This was to ensure that her view is not taken as the normative Muslim view. From the point of view of preparing pupils for exams, this also avoided misinforming or confusing pupils by providing them with "inaccurate" information, in relation to the curriculum content. Again, this revealed the limitations of neutrality and the precariousness of including one's faith in the

classroom. For Mr Ali, the use of "we" could potentially compromise his teacher identity, even though in that moment it was backstage. For Miss Aziz, this could potentially compromise her pupils' learning. As such, this draws out how the backstage identity must be actively 'held in abeyance' within their teacher practice, as it can be elicited from the pupils' construction of these participants' identities as teachers.

As a result, code-switching was a pedagogical strategy that allowed the participants to occupy both a Muslim identity and a neutral RE teacher identity in the classroom. As Essers and Benschop (2009) note, these shifts in footings afforded these participants new possibilities of being within different moments in the classroom by shifting footing between the professional and personal, and the different expectations and agentic desires that these positions bring. Doing so enabled them to respond to the needs of the classroom discussion and the positioning that others were trying to impose on them. Thus, through the use of code-switching, the participants could be 'Muslim' and 'RE teacher' by switching between these frames moment by moment.

It is worth drawing attention to how fluid and dynamic these shifts in footing were. During my fieldwork I witnessed Mrs Khan and Miss Aziz switching codes constantly throughout single lessons, in a constant negotiation and re-negotiation of the positioning of themselves. This highlights their degree of skill in manipulating and performing aspects of their identities. As such, this skill was understood as part of their degree of professionalism: their skill as an RE teacher. In this way, the use of code-switching reflects the degree of dynamism, creativity, and fluidity in which the participants could maintain the boundaries between these identity-attributes, demonstrating a capacity to play with the codes of being Muslim by seemingly shifting in and out of the expectations associated with their beliefs.

However, the effectiveness of code-switching from the point of view of their pupils could be questioned. It is a subtle act that relies on the audience to understand the meaning of these verbal cues. Whilst this code-switching may well appear to be skilful and effective to an adult observer in the classroom, it could be considered unlikely that all pupils, across a range of ages and abilities, will pick up on and understand these subtle cues. This could perhaps be a factor underlying the conflation of their identity-attributes by Muslim pupils.

### 6.1.2 Personal Life Knowledge (PLK)

The participants also demonstrated the capacity to incorporate their faith within the framework of RE itself, 'bridging' the professional with the personal through their pedagogy. This was captured through the use of personal life knowledge (PLK) within their teaching practice. Everington's (2012, 2014, 2015) work has drawn attention to the way RE teachers utilise their biographies as a

pedagogical resource in the classroom. Termed personal life knowledge (PLK), Everington (2012, p. 345) defines this as:

> The kind of knowledge that teachers have acquired and continue to acquire in their personal lives… For some teachers, membership of a faith community will have provided personal knowledge of the religions that are taught, as they are 'insiders' to a particular community and its wider context.

This knowledge is distinct from content knowledge, as phenomenological "fact", because it represents a personal, experiential understanding of religion. The use of PLK reflects an awareness of the unique ontological position of the RE teacher, where one's own beliefs are a reflexive part of their professional role. By utilising their beliefs as a resource in the classroom, and although fraught with tensions echoing the concerns over "neutrality", Everington (2012, p. 343) argues that the use of PLK is a way in which RE teachers ''connected' aspects of their personal and professional lives'. Hence, PLK was used as a way in which minority faith teachers managed the 'ontological bridging and bonding' in the classroom (Everington 2015).

The prevalent use of PLK throughout the participants' narratives suggests that this kind of 'ontological bridging' was a significant part of their boundary-work. Its use was partly predicated on the pragmatic realisation that they were visibly Muslim, and therefore they would be perceived as such. Again, by recognising that their faith already formed part of the classroom environment, simply ignoring their faith was seen as "impractical". However, the use of personal stories was also legitimised as a powerful way to make RE "real". As Mr Chowdhury explained:

> Well, you know, I made it very clear, you see, from when... When I got my feet in, you know, I became more established, you know, I would share personal stories with students. I was very explicit with my experiences...To make [RE] real, I had a huge advantage of being a brown Muslim who had experienced it, than just a normal, white RE teacher who is referring to examples (Interview 18, 27:17 – 37:32).

Here Mr Chowdhury had configured his experience of being a Muslim in a predominantly white area as a pedagogical resource in the classroom. By sharing powerful personal stories, he was able to bring in his faith identity to bridge the ontological gap between himself and his white students, evoking in them the impact of racism that he had experienced. This also "made it real" for them, expressing his use of PLK pedagogically, enriching his teaching about racism from real experience.[17]

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[17] Chetty (2014) has discussed how black teachers' accounts of racism can be used to evoke powerful, anti-institutional stories in the classroom, in contrast to the "official" discourse in textbooks.

Thus, the use of PLK aligns with his positioning as a role model in school, as the only "brown Muslim", and his commitment to breaking stereotypes in his role.

Similarly, PLK was used to "make Islam real" in the classroom. In the previous chapter, I stated how the participants saw their faith as source of subject knowledge. Through the use of PLK this became explicit, with their experiences enriching the curriculum representation of Islam with lived examples. Miss Ahmed, for example, spoke of sharing her own experiences of Hajj:

> So, I took them into the lecture theatre and put it on for them to see. And then I got one of boys dressed in the *ihram*, like over his uniform, and then went through all the different stages of Hajj and got them to re-enact the stages. So, and that was really good, and then so it was their tasks to do, but then I just put in what, my perspective, not exactly my perspective but my experiences (Interview 3, 55:39 – 58:08).

Again, the participants were generally supportive of using their own experiences in this way because of its pedagogical benefit. They had this experience so why not use it? This use of PLK therefore brought together their agentic goals as Muslims and as RE teachers, in their desire to express their 'lived' experience of their faith whilst enriching their teaching practice. It was also a powerful way of contextualising the often static representations of Islam within the textbook materials, which has been a criticism of the RE curriculum (Hayward, 2006; Jackson et al., 2010; Revell, 2012). Here, I support Everington's (2012, p. 352-353) claim that PLK warrants further investigation as a pedagogical strategy in its own right, as a way to contextualise curriculum representations of religion.

However, participants were aware of a difference between their "perspective" and their "experience", as indicated in the last quote. This resembles the pedagogical distinction previously discussed between the academic phenomenological "facts" of religion, and their own "opinion" about the topic of conversation. Some of the participants' use of PLK blurred these boundaries by using stories that explicated their beliefs, typically in response to pupils' inquiries about the teacher's view. This was most noticeable during my fieldwork with Mrs Khan, who would often share stories in this way, as she did in the following exchange:

> The starter was to consider the morality of some statements (i.e. you find some money; would you hand it in?). They were very generic situations. One was a question about bullying. Mrs Khan stated that "I hope no one says it's okay".

There was a lot of debate about whether to hand in a fiver. Some pupils claimed finders' keepers. One pupil asked, "Miss who would actually give that in?!". Miss Khan responded "I would" – and proceeded to tell a story about how she returned a coat from Asda that someone forgot to scan. The pupils laughed at this, some said it's ridiculous – "Why?!". She responded by saying its morally right – "It's part of my religion, that would be stealing. And yours". There was no further explanation of this. The pupils responded by being quiet (fieldnotes 16, March 2017, p 11).

The way Mrs Khan used PLK in this instance is somewhat different to its usage in the previous accounts. It was a way in which she explicitly adopted a faith footing in the classroom, in this case within the discussion of morals and ethics. This resembled the "impartial" RE teacher model in which the teacher's beliefs form an active part of the classroom, incorporating faith in terms of wider professional discourses and being 'pedagogised' for classroom discussion. However, although this ontologically bridged a moral gap between Mrs Khan's personal and professional positions, this did have the effect of creating a normative thrust to her statements. During my observations I was left questioning the extent to which her pupils, particularly Muslim pupils, felt that they were able to question her beliefs. As a result, the boundary between Mrs Khan's performance of the RE teacher and her personal faith was constantly blurred, along with how she was relating to her pupils.

Thus, the use of PLK, by virtue of blurring the neutral-faith boundary, was fraught with tensions surrounding neutrality. As Everington (2014, pp. 169 - 170) has also noted, the policy 'grey area' surrounding the inclusion of RE teachers' beliefs problematised its use and required the trainees in her study to figure out what the acceptable boundaries were. Similarly, the participants in this study were wary of the potential feedback that blurring this boundary could cause, particularly in sharing their own "perspective" on topics. This caution was expressed by Miss Loonat in her efforts to make sure she was never "by herself up there":

I answer them like as much as I can - so like y'know to the point where it is just a generic, like so y'know like the death penalty, if it was a rapist or a killer why not! I mean everyone else would, he's put his hand up, like I would relate it to someone in the class. I'd never make sure that I'm by myself up there, like there's always – "Oh you think so too?", y'know like get their opinions first, or sometimes like with some questions you go "You're not supposed to know that about me, that's a personal question" - "Yeah but you've asked us Miss", but you're the one who's gonna be answering not me (Interview 10.2, 4:00 – 6:03).

The use of PLK, by blurring these boundaries, could therefore place the participants in a vulnerable position on the classroom stage, not only bringing their beliefs into scrutiny, but potentially breaching the wider professional discourses of their 'secular' school contexts. There were fears around indoctrinating, bias, and, in some instances, potentially breaching *Prevent* and FBVs, through the stories that they told.[18] So, whilst PLK constructed an ontological bridge between their personal and professional identities it also made them potentially more vulnerable to scrutiny.

Despite these shortcomings, the prevalence of the use of PLK within these narratives suggests that it remained an important pedagogical aspect of these participants' work. PLK constructed a new footing whereby they embedded their faith *within* their teacher performance. It was not a way for these teachers to force their beliefs into the classroom, but rather they were incorporated through the wider professional RE framework and expressed for their pedagogical value to their teaching. Again, this practice reflects the participants' capacity to reconfigure their Muslim identity, here in terms of the wider professional discourses of the RE teacher, by drawing on their lived experience as a pedagogy to enrich static, de-contextual representations of Islam in the classroom.

### 6.1.3 Faith as an Ethos

A much subtler incorporation of faith was indicated by the effect their faith had on their underlying teaching character. Many participants spoke of a resonance between themselves as Muslims and their work as RE teachers. A common theme throughout the narratives was the perception that RE teaching was as a morally good job, often spoken of in contrast to the "debt collector" or "banker" which were "bad jobs", associated with purely material gains. For Miss Meer, her Muslim agency, or "greater jihad", was encapsulated in the unique moral dimension of RE teaching:

> As a Muslim, I still believe I've got my greater jihad, and I feel as though, in some way, I'm fulfilling it through teaching, because I'm teaching other people values, human values. Not necessarily Muslim values. Human values that are important (Interview 17, 36:06 – 42:02).

Here RE teaching becomes part of the wider sphere of moral action, allowing her to "be good" through her work. Thus, being an RE teacher was incorporated into her identity as a committed Muslim. Similarly, participants drew attention to how their faith shaped their character as a teacher. Miss Memon jokingly remarked that her faith made her a "calmer" teacher:

> Like I am a lot calmer… When they are really frustrating me and misbehaving constantly throughout the lesson, I'm a lot more patient, and I think that is because of my religion now (Interview 15, 50:41 – 1:04:01).

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[18] Homosexuality was a topic where these fears were frequently raised. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

For Mr Jones:

> Yes. Massively. So, it's not something I share with anybody really, but there are quite stringent rules about speech, not backbiting - which is defined as saying about people what they wouldn't want said in front of them. So - I don't succeed - but I'm very aware that in the staff room always biting about a student, parents, staff, and it's just I think not running down your students behind their back is very important (Interview 6, 1:10:51 – 1:13:23).

These resonances suggest that the participants were embodying their Muslim identity through 'who they were' as RE teachers. Their values and character as Muslims could shape subtle aspects of their performance, in turn becoming their teaching values and character. In these participants' experience, this indicates that Muslimness could be something that was much more implicit than overt practices or dress. As the 'lived religion' approach has articulated, this opens the conceptual capacity of what being Muslim is, expanding it in a much more implicit, gestalt direction.

From this perspective, for these teachers it is unclear whether the boundaries, that were apparently at the heart of their teacher identities, are experienced as actual boundaries in their day-to-day working lives. This was further blurred by the suggestion that RE teaching itself was an act of faith. For Mr Ali this was one of the most enticing aspects of the role:

> There's a saying in Islam that says 'everything has a tax, and a tax acknowledges to teach'… So with that in mind Islam has a huge tradition of teaching and learning – it's always existed. The Prophet did it, his family did it, so again going back to previous questions about how it influences my life - my job is an expression of my faith as well. When I go to work from 7:30 till 5 I'm worshipping God in those hours. So I never see it as a job, I see it as part of my daily worship. And that's a nice feeling to have in a job that is (Interview 8, 37:48 – 40:12).

Here Mr Ali explicitly situates his RE teaching role within the traditional Islamic notions of the teacher. He legitimises his teaching role within a religious discourse, expressing that teaching is a valuable profession in Islam. By interweaving these religious and professional discourses, he viewed his teaching as "part of his daily worship". This account attests not only to the degree of synchronicity between his faith and his professional role, with the two coming together through traditional Islamic understandings of the teacher, but also, that the very act of being a teacher was also seen as a form of embodying his Muslim identity. For the participants who saw their work as faith they seemingly dissolved the personal-professional boundary itself, subsuming the teacher within the understanding of their faith. Importantly, this was without requiring any specific

performative change or switching of frames because, as Mr Ali remarked, the act of teaching is itself an act of faith.

These discussions reveal a new capacity in which the participants could be both Muslim and RE teachers *simultaneously*, manifesting as an ethos that underpinned their work. Such a phenomenon has been emphasised by Cadge and Konieczny (2014) in their exploration of faith 'hiding in plain sight' in the workplace. They (2014, p. 9) write that 'workers use religious worldviews and *ethoi* to interpret their work tasks and interactions with others' to construct coherent identities that reach into 'secular' arenas. Here, by interpreting their role as RE teachers through the lens of their faith, the participants constructed their work as part of their faith identity. This was a process which inflects the supposedly dominant frontstage and backstage positioning by muddying the presence of the boundaries themselves. The potential for RE teaching, teaching generally, and work itself, to be considered as an act of faith has been rarely remarked upon, particularly in relation to Muslims. But it arguably reveals an important avenue in which the 'secular' can be incorporated within Islamic repertoires of meaning. Therefore, I propose that the clear demonstration in these participants' narratives that Islam can be 'hidden in plain sight' in the 'secular' workplace is a significant analytical contribution to understanding the experiences and construction of Muslim identities in contemporary contexts, undermining the supposed divisions between Islamic and 'secular' spheres.

## 6.2 Other Roles

In addition to their pedagogy, there were other roles that the participants occupied in their school contexts that presented different avenues to express their faith. BME research has established that the other roles attributed to BME teachers were key features of their experience. Notably, their positioning as role models has been highlighted as a major characteristic of BME teachers (Haque & Elliot, 2017; McNamara et al., 2009; Osler, 1997). Other roles to support the needs of BME pupils, such as acting as translators for BME pupil communities, have also been identified as roles that are earmarked for BME teachers (Ghuman, 1995; McNamara et al., 2009). Whilst generally seen as a positive way for BME teachers to incorporate their biographies as BME actors in their school contexts and to advance their careers, there has been criticism that this places a further burden on BME teachers, specifically on those who just want to teach (Carrington & Skelton, 2003, p. 261).

In the present study, the participants often referred to such other roles as ways that they could incorporate their Muslim identity more explicitly. Whereas the above pedagogical discussion largely reflected the participants' experiences in the classroom, exploring these other roles provides a way of seeing their experiences within the broader contexts of their schools. They made reference to

their other responsibilities as role models, as "ambassadors", and some had led faith-based initiatives in their schools, such as Miss Aziz's "lunchtime Ramadan club" (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 17). Here I have decided to focus on their positioning as role models given its importance both to the participants and its presence in the existing literature.

### 6.2.1 Role Modelling

In the wider literature, the capacity for BME and Muslim teachers to act as role models has been identified as a key characteristic of their experience (Bush et al., 2006; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Haque & Elliot, 2017; McNamara et al., 2009; Osler, 1997). Many BME teachers see themselves as role models, willingly or unwillingly, for BME pupils. Carrington and Skelton (2003) note that the capacity for BME teachers to act as role models has been used by some to enhance their employability, using it as a tool to gain promotion. Moreover, arguments have been made that role models improve pupil performance. Therefore, the role model argument has been one of the longest, and strongest, ways in which BME identities have been incorporated within their roles as teachers.

All of the participants in this study also saw themselves as role models, echoing this existing literature. This centred on the impact of their Muslim identity in the classroom, often in conjunction with their visible Muslimness. The main way these teachers spoke of being a role model was in their capacity to break stereotypes, evoking notions of 'race' and racism. All of the teachers spoke of "breaking stereotypes" as being an integral part of their role as RE teachers, drawing on the discourse of RE as a force for social cohesion popularised in a post 9/11 context (see Moulin 2012). Given the nature of RE, it was felt that the role put them in an excellent position to break stereotypes and challenge misconceptions in wider discourses surrounding Muslims, particularly in relation to the media. For example, breaking stereotypes was an important aspect of Miss Meer's experience as a teacher:

> I think it's important for people to see that there are individuals out there that want to be nice, that are decent… But they're also Muslim, because it's this idea of Muslims are the bad people. And I wanted to be, sort of, the walking, talking evidence against that. (Interview 17, 12:24 – 17:53).

Similarly, for Miss Mazhar:

> It's possible to be a Muslim, it's possible to be a philosopher, it's possible to be a girl, a Pakistani girl living in the UK alone without her parents, you know it's this time. I guess its stereotypes, and battling stereotypes y'know? (Interview 2, 54:18 - 55:05).

As I have highlighted throughout, their positioning as role models affected their pedagogical practice through this commitment. Another feature of this, however, is the participants' suggestion that they broke stereotypes by simply being visible Muslims in school. In reference to the ontological bridging discussed above, the teachers in my study were often the only opportunity non-Muslim pupils had for interacting with someone who was Muslim. Therefore, as Miss Meer remarked, in this capacity their actions were "walking, talking evidence" against the stereotypes of Muslims as "bad" or terrorists.

This capacity to combat racism and break stereotypes was extended beyond the classroom toward challenging the anti-Muslim sentiment of staff and parents, groups who make up the wider school social culture. Again, this raises the issue of representation in their school contexts. Often these participants were among the only Asian staff members in the school body and so immediately "stood out" from the teaching body. For Mrs Iqbal, being a Muslim, hijab-wearing, Asian teacher enabled her to challenge the assumptions of the wider staff body, as she remarked in the following incident:

> Yeah because they always assume that... that you must have had an arranged marriage and that you've done this and you've done that, and I'm like NO. Actually, a lot of the staff thought I was a TA (Teaching Assistant) when I first started (Interview 1, 46:00 – 46:12).

For Miss Sumar, this involved contending with the views of pupils' parents:

> Their parents were saying stuff like y'know all Muslims are terrorists, that sort of stuff, they come into my classroom - I felt like I had this additional responsibility in a sense… I felt like I had to try and be the best that I could… so that they would talk out and if somebody in their family said, "Oh Muslims are like this", they could go like "My teacher is not like that and she's Muslim" (Interview 7, 39:10 – 41:28).

These accounts demonstrate how central their visible Muslim identity was in wider social contexts of their schools. Their experience outside of the classroom in their schools was also shaped by being Muslim, constantly shifting them to this frame. So, as Muslim teachers, their positioning as role models was an integral part of their embodied experience within their wider school contexts.

It is worth drawing attention to the impact of 'race' and racism here. All the participants had experienced racism during their teaching careers, often in the form of Islamophobic micro-aggressions in the classroom. As Mrs Iqbal remarked:

I would say teaching is actually quite a racist profession. I've gone through and I have had so many different things being said to me, some of them really sort of discreet, and some of them that have been blatant racist comments made to me (Interview 1, 46:12 – 46:33).

Moreover, racism was part of their everyday experience in wider society. Their positioning as role models therefore, in part, reflected their own experiences of racism, and their capacity to challenge these sentiments in their pupils by virtue of the authority bestowed on them as teachers. As Miss Meer reflected:

And I guess, in a classroom, they can't walk away from you. You know, they're in front of you whether they like it or not, and you have enough time to win them round, in a way (Interview 17, 12:24 – 17:53).

In terms of the relationship between their Muslim and teacher identities, their positioning as role models was a seemingly necessary part of their construction within their school contexts. Thus, their Muslim identities were explicitly part of their wider notions of being an RE teacher in their capacity to act as role models, alongside their footing as RE teachers within their classrooms.

Many of the participants also emphasised that they were role models for, and seen as role models by, Muslim pupils. In part, this was due to a perception that these participants were in a position to "represent" them within school (Mrs Iqbal, Interview 1, 21:42 – 21:51). This feeling was also predicated on these shared experiences of racism within school, and, in a way, their sense that they were there to protect Muslim pupils. Moreover, these shared experiences extended to their faith, evoking notions of the *Ummah* in their relationship as role models for Muslim pupils (Mrs Khan, fieldnotes 16, March 2017, p. 76). These feelings of being part of a shared faith community with Muslim pupils not only led Muslim pupils naturally to see them as role models, but also elicited feelings of religious responsibility from the participants in their position as Muslim teachers. As Miss Meer commented:

We always talk about the *Ummah* don't we? And that's immediate (Interview 17, 17:53 – 29:33).

For Mr Ali, this position as role model was thrust upon him due to this shared sense of faith:

When I became a teacher I made it absolutely clear that I refuse to be a role model because that's too much pressure for me, because one mistake can be magnified. But its happened. I notice it all the time. Moreso in the last couple of years of my teaching, and I first feared it quite a lot. I'm like 'pppfffttt' this is

a big burden on my shoulders, but actually its made me think about what I say and do a bit more - which is a positive thing, and if I want to be a mirror of what I want my students to be - in terms of the character and the way they think, then I'm like okay no problem then (Interview 8, 45:24 – 47:15).

Evident in Mr Ali's account is the conflation from Muslim pupils of these participants' teacher and faith identities, constructing them as 'Muslim RE teachers'. This brought with it, willingly or unwillingly, a commitment to dealing with matters of religion as part of their role. As such, their understanding of role models evoked an explicit faith dimension in their relationship with Muslim pupils.

Specifically, many of the participants spoke of being role models for Muslim girls, reflecting the configuration of their 'role model-ness' with their own biographies as Muslim women. They empathised with these pupils and their experiences of growing up, wearing the hijab, and going through the British education system:

> I felt it because it was a school… [with a] Muslim majority, Bengali background, just like me - home situation just like me, a lot of girls who were literally like how I was when I was in Sixth form, so they used to come to me and be like "Oh Miss how was Uni? How did you cope with this?" - they saw me as somebody who had already gone through it and had come out of it still with my faith intact, and so they wanted to know (Miss Sumar, Interview 7, 1:18:29 – 1:20:21).

> Yeah definitely, like especially for the girls, I mean there's been quite a few of the girls that have started wearing hijab, which I thought was interesting (Mrs Iqbal, Interview 1, 19:34 – 21:23).

Accordingly, part of these participants' time outside of the classroom was spent attending to the Muslim pupils' religious needs. I will go on to discuss specific initiatives in the proceeding section, but for the moment I wish to draw attention to the extent to which Muslim pupils drew upon these participants for support and guidance, especially Muslim girls. There was the sense that Muslim girls could come to them with questions that they would otherwise feel unable to ask at home or in the mosque. Miss Loonat spoke about giving such advice:

> They come and tell me and issues that's going on, so in that sense confidant. There was one last year, and I suspect it was her, there was a teacher who came up to me and there was a girl who is a Muslim and she's had sex can

they come and see you?... I think that's what I'm a reminder of their faith, of like following the rules (Interview 10, 20:09 – 24:12).

In this way, their positioning as role models for Muslim pupils brought with it a whole aspect of their work that was explicitly concerned with matters of faith. This was essentially confessional by sharing their beliefs and opinions with pupils who were seeking advice and guidance. As Miss Loonat noted above, she was a reminder of "following the rules", reflecting this sense of confessionalism. Thus, their capacity to act as role models seemed to be a separate sphere in which they could be Muslims explicitly and confessionally.

Dealing with matters of religion extended to their commitment to breaking "traditional" Islamic stereotypes, further reinforcing this other explicitly religious dimension of their work. Many of the participants drew attention to their perceived need to break the stereotypes that Muslim pupils held. There were two distinct facets to this. Some participants made reference to a distinction between what was "culture" and what was "actually Islam", particularly surrounding views on the role of women. Breaking down stereotypes in this instance centred on breaking down the "cultural" norms that pupils espoused as Islamic beliefs. Miss Ahmed recounted one such incident surrounding the hijab:

> So for example a lot of girls used to wear the scarves, and in the middle there was this... style where they used to put their scarves really high up, so I did an assembly on it, and actually in Islam it says that the Prophet said that if you put it up like a camel's hump then you don't even get to smell paradise, or something like that. So they don't know. And it's about differentiating these things (Interview 3, 1:06:50 – 1:10:14).

Miss Meer recounted challenging the views of Muslim parents:

> So, you know, even stereotypes within the Muslim community is something that I wanted to battle. What I have found lately, and it is something that really frustrates me, is even getting respect from men in the Muslim community is sometimes... If you're not wearing a hijab, then, you know, go home, sort yourself out, or come back with a gentleman, come back with your husband or your Dad. And that's the way it is. And that's something that's always frustrated me (Interview 17, 12:24 – 17:53).

As I noted in the previous chapter, the authority of the participants afforded by their role as RE teachers allows them to engage with, and change, these prevailing narratives surrounding Muslim women in the Muslim community more widely. I would argue that their capacity to break

entrenched "cultural" stereotypes moves them toward religious leaders in this regard, shaping the beliefs and values of their local Muslim communities through their teaching of Muslim pupils.

Another facet, more directly related to RE, was to challenge the Muslim pupils' understanding of religion itself and their general disinterest or derogatory view toward learning about other faiths. Many of the participants had experienced resistance from Muslim pupils to studying other religions, just as Ipgrave (1999) and Everington (2015) have also noted. Here, their unique positioning as role models as 'Muslim RE teachers', along with their biographies as Muslims who had succeeded in education and had grasped the study of religion from an academic perspective, therefore brought a commitment to challenging these views. This frustration was bluntly expressed by Mr Jones:

> I think the biggest problem… is this fear of infection by ideas that we couldn't counter. Y'know that we - I don't know if Muslim parents do withdraw their kids from RE - they might feel that that's putting their head above the parapet, but there's certainly a sense of real guardedness about engaging with RE for fear that you'll…  like somehow the pristine pure theology that we're so carefully curating in the mosque will get undermined (Interview 6, 1:24:40 – 1:27:00).

This dimension is particularly interesting to consider in relation to their otherwise neutral positioning. There was a clear normativity surrounding these interventions – a claim from these participants of what Islam "really is". Role modelling arguably offered them a normative Islamic footing in this regard, in their capacity to shape the beliefs of their Muslim pupils. In doing so, these discussions held up a mirror to the participants' wider Muslim communities. In many regards, they considered themselves unique from other Muslims, especially Imams, in their academic success and their willingness to understand and engage critically with religion.

So, despite their position as non-confessional RE teachers, they seemingly demonstrated a degree of religious authority within their Muslim communities in their ability to challenge these accepted norms. The fact that some of the participants were teaching about religion to large numbers of Muslim pupils every day, and engaging in this kind of implicit religious guidance, suggests that they have considerable influence, even though their teaching is non-confessional. Several participants tentatively recognised this authority. Miss Meer remarked that teaching "gave her a voice":

> And my Mum's always said, keep your mouth shut, keep your mouth shut, because the community aren't going to look at you well. And I thought, no. And I guess teaching gives me that voice (Interview 17, 12:24 – 17:53).

Others explicitly put themselves, or were put, in competition with the "local Imam", like Mr Shah:

> Because sometimes I feel as though I am doing the job of their Imam for them, where I'm actually exposing, not exposing them [pupils], I'm enabling them to understand that Islam is much more than just a religion of rituals and practices and growing beards and covering your head and hitting the ground with your forehead and throwing pebbles in Mecca (Interview 13 50:34 – 57:20).

These accounts are fascinating as it suggests a different kind of authority to that of the Imam, one which resides in RE itself. Their commitment to exploring the meaning of Islamic beliefs, and not just the "rituals and practices", again suggests a powerful synergy within these more implicit expressions of Muslimness, and which seems to be, in some way, a response to the criticisms of the traditional pedagogies used in Islamic educational institutions. These traditional pedagogies, such as that employed in the *dars-i-nizami* curriculum, have faced criticism for its emphasis on sacrality (Geaves, 2012), and an inability to adapt to the modem British context (Gilliat-Ray, 2006, p. 67), by focussing on transmission over understanding (Sahin, 2013). Therefore, I suggest that this places them within the broader landscape of Islamic leadership in Britain, and that, in many ways, these teachers could be understood as a "new" form of Islamic leadership in their capacity as role models for Muslim pupils. Potentially, this also reveals the capacity for RE teachers to be considered as religious leaders more widely, as their academic authority lends weight to their voices within the wider social contexts of their schools and their communities.

Therefore, the importance of being a role model to these participants' teacher identities highlights the importance of their Muslim identities in its construction. Role modelling offered a way in which they could incorporate their Muslim identities into their role openly and explicitly, primarily as a way to break stereotypes, held by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Their visibility as Muslims was a central part of their experience and was turned into something that they could use within their school contexts. But, in addition, their faith identity reveals an entirely new dimension to the notion of role modelling that has otherwise been absent in the literature. I have already mentioned, and will discuss further in the next chapter, the religious expectations that Muslim pupils put on these teachers by their conflation of the participants' Muslim and teacher identity attributes. As a result, aspects of theology and faith were explicitly dealt with in their work through their positioning as role models, bringing with it an added sense of responsibility. Moreover, the nature of RE seemed to be especially synergistic with this capacity, and their commitment to breaking stereotypes, as issues of 'race', racism, and religion were all significant topics for discussion. In this way, being a role model allowed the participants to occupy a faith position in their school contexts, in their relationships with Muslim and non-Muslim pupils, parents, and staff.

## 6.3 Ritual Practice

Another important sphere of practice was that of ritual. The wider literature has been preoccupied with these visible practices as sites of tension for Muslim teachers, encapsulated in the dichotomy between the 'good Muslim' and 'good teacher' (Benn & Dagkas, 2006; Benn et al., 2011). Observation of religious requirements: notably prayer, growing a beard, wearing the hijab, observing Ramadan, have all met resistance within school institutions (Mogra, 2013; Shah & Shaikh, 2010). Accordingly, it has been argued that the general lack of accommodation of these practices has been a source of isolation and exclusion for Muslim teachers, making it difficult for them to incorporate their Muslimness in school.

In this section I explore how these participants attended to these Muslim practices and consider the extent to which their position as RE teachers affected their capacity to attend to the spiritual. Readers will note that aspects of ritual practice have been barely mentioned until this point. Whilst the notion of the "practicing Muslim" was important to these participants' sense of their Muslim identity (see Chapter 5), concerns surrounding ritual practice formed little discussion in the interviews and during my observations. When I raised ritual practice as a topic of discussion, this was considered mainly in practical terms: how this "fit" within their work as RE teachers. As I go onto discuss, I believe this is indicative of a broader pragmatic, 'lived' understanding of Muslimness that the participants had developed. To explore this, I consider how the participants managed prayer.

Participants generally felt able to attend to ritual practice within their work as non-confessional RE teachers. Beyond the discussion of prayer, participants also highlighted their abstention from alcohol, observing Ramadan fasts, and their dress as significant aspects of ritual practice. Sadly, due to practical limitations I cannot engage with all of these aspects here. I intend to explore ritual practice more substantially in a subsequent paper arising from my project. In brief, and as noted in Chapter 5, avoiding alcohol was a significant statement of Muslimness in terms of the wider norms of teaching. Some of the participants referred to the "drinking culture" of the school, highlighted by the school year being punctuated by alcoholic events, which was generally seen to 'other' them socially. This supports wider research that has noted the impact of alcohol in terms of the identity construction of BME teachers (Basit et al., 2007). Most of the teachers also mentioned fasting during Ramadan as an important ritual observance. This had both physical and mental ramifications in terms of their teaching practice. During my fieldwork with Miss Aziz I saw her physically weaken over the course of the day and struggle to keep speaking due to a lack of water (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 23).[19] Interestingly, she had developed a strategy for this by "planning around fasting", leading

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[19] Something that I also struggled with by incidentally fasting with her (see 4.4 Methodological Reflections).

revision sessions in the afternoons that centred on more independent work (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 25).

### 6.3.1 Prayer (*Salah*)

Prayer (*salah*) is one of the 5 pillars of Islam and an obligatory ritual practice for every Muslim. Prayers are observed five times a day at designated times, typically lasting between 5-10 minutes. As prayer is a spiritually cleansing exercise, Muslims are encouraged to perform *wudu* (ritual cleansing) before prayer, and pray in a clean space, often using a prayer mat on which to prostrate themselves. The Friday congregational (*jummah*) prayer also holds special significance, a compulsory act of worship for Muslim men, which involves a sermon (*khutba*). In terms of the working school day, then, prayer requires both a time and space commitment, which brings with it practical considerations.

The participants' discussion of prayer primarily centred around the degree to which they could observe prayer within school timetables. Given their workload and various other duties (such as lunchtime clubs and playground duty) fitting prayer into their congested timetable was problematic. As a result, most of them approached prayer with a "when they could" attitude. There was a preference for praying outside of the school day because then there could be no clashes. For example, during my observations with Miss Aziz I asked whether she would be praying at lunchtimes, to which she replied that she "makes them up" when she's at home (fieldnotes 19, July 2017 p. 12). When in school, the participants typically only prayed during lunchtimes (the *Zuhr* prayer) on days where they did not have other duties, as their lunch break afforded them enough time. Moreover, none of the participants participated in the Friday (*jummah*) prayer, despite being obligatory for men, because it was simply too impractical to leave school, get to the mosque, and come back again (Mr Jones, fieldnotes 6, June 2017, p. 9).

Considering prayer from a spatial perspective also raised practical concerns. In the main, bespoke prayer facilities were not present in the participants' schools. Even if they were, none of the participants spoke of using such prayer facilities. Instead, they often used their own classrooms as prayer spaces, and used the nearest staff or disabled toilets to perform *wudu*. Again, this seemed to be pragmatic because they could configure their room as needed and get on with other tasks immediately after they had finished. Some also spoke of a reluctance to pray in a prayer room with other pupils, suggestive of a sort of compromise of their teacher-pupil relationship and eliciting the professional-personal boundary. None of the participants mentioned using staff rooms either, although there are no data to suggest why. I found this interesting because these spaces are for staff use and meant to provide some privacy for teachers during the school day. It could be that these spaces had simply not been considered, or that they were understood as social spaces and so not

suitable. It could also indicate a sense of wariness around such public displays of belief, particularly about the perception of other non-Muslim staff and potential remarks, or how this may be viewed with regards to their professionalism as neutral RE teachers, which has been suggested in the wider literature.

I was surprised by how generally unproblematic these difficulties surrounding the observation of prayer was given it is obligatory in the Islamic tradition. To legitimise this, the participants emphasised a pragmatic understanding of Islam. Some emphasised, like Mrs Khan, that their faith shouldn't "be a burden" for them (fieldnotes 16, March 2017, p. 30). For others, like Mr Begum, prayer was not a practice they observed often anyway, as "not very practicing" Muslims (Interview 14, 14:30 – 18:10). Reflecting the construction of their RE teacher identities discussed in Chapter 5, many also stated that they put their duties as teachers first, before their duties to observe ritual. As Mr Shah put:

> But if I'm in a professional context I have, as part of my faith also, which teaches me that I've got to be loyal to my contract. I can't make decisions. Where I've got the freedom to do my own thing I will do, I mean, at lunchtimes I will pray, and I just put a notice up (Interview 13, 1:57:55 – 2:06:23).

As did Miss Memon:

> If I could I would, I will do it, but sometimes the work has to come first, because have like deadlines to me and students are coming to see me at lunchtime (Interview 15, 15:26 – 26:38).

These legitimisations show a capacity to engage practically and flexibly with the requirements of their faith. Whilst not an ideal situation, they were willing to miss prayers in order to attend to their duties as teachers. In some ways prayer seemed to be much like eating lunch itself, in that it is something usually considered necessary and unnegotiable, but which in the world of teaching becomes something you would like to do, and will squeeze in if you can. This diversity of positions surrounding prayer is something that is overlooked, particularly in the BME literature, which assumes the primacy of such ritual practices. Rather, and reflecting their construction of their RE teacher identities, this suggests that they were willing to position prayer backstage, as an explicitly religious practice, behind the duties that they had to attend to as RE teachers first. This was even the case for the self-identifying 'Muslim RE teachers' in the sample, like Mrs Khan.

The development of these practical narratives could be understood as important tactics for managing faith in their school contexts over the course of their careers. Much like the other skills and awareness that they develop during their teaching careers, developing more realistic

expectations of observing prayer within their school contexts was necessary as they were given more duties and responsibilities. What is important to highlight here is that the participants seemed to be able to legitimise their changing expectations from the Islamic tradition. Noted above, some examples are that religion "shouldn't be a burden", that Islam teaches Muslims to be "loyal to their contract", and that prayers can be "made up" for at different times. There is interesting scope here for the insights of Islamic theologians and scholars to develop these kinds of narratives to enable and support Muslims in the workplace.

However, there was still a degree of frustration at a perceived lack of accommodation on their school's behalf. Their acceptance, then, could be questioned as it was the temporal and spatial constraints that made it unfeasible. Miss Meer put this bluntly:

> I haven't prayed in school. There is a member of staff, a couple of members of staff, who pray here. They use the disabled toilets as a washroom when they need to, and then there's a little office up in IT where they do pray. But we... And we've had this conversation as a department. We'll feel as though there's not enough space. If I wanted to practice my faith fully, there isn't enough space to do it. There's not enough time. I barely have time to have lunch. It's ridiculous in this place (Interview 17, 1:23:57 – 1:26:51).

Several participants also spoke of feeling like they "didn't have the right to ask" because there were not many other Muslims (Miss Meer, Interview 17, 1:23:53 – 1:26:51; Miss Mazhar, Interview 2, 1:00:53 – 1:01:56). As such, this raises the issue of representation within the teacher body, with the needs of Muslim teachers potentially being overlooked as a minority within school contexts. From these narratives, there is certainly the suggestion that schools could be made 'faith friendly workplaces' (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2016) and work harder to accommodate these needs, particularly with regard to time constraints. In this way, their Muslim identity was spatially and temporally constrained by the school itself, having to "fit" in around their teaching timetables and within the available spaces within these 'secular' working environments.

The performance of prayer also seemed to be impacted by their career trajectories, which brought increasing demands on their time. Observing prayer during the working day seemed to be a more pressing need, and more possible, to newer teachers. Miss Medhi, an NQT, drew attention to this in her interview as a potential challenge to her training:

> So from the minute you wake up in the morning you pray the morning prayer and throughout the day, so even when I was doing the PGCE - the afternoon prayer in the winter that comes into my day, so at lunchtime I might take - I

might just quickly, even if I don't have time I won't even do it, but I would say my prayer because I have to do that (Interview 9, 10:48 – 16:12).

In contrast, many of the more experienced participants spoke of stopping praying during the school day because they were simply "too busy". Mrs Khan reflected on the impact that becoming a mother and a Head of Department had on prayer:

> I just try to focus on who I am, but work my vices, I think my main downfall is sticking to rituals and that's where kind of fall back on in terms of prayers, because I work and a mother as well it's difficult to do my prayers on time and do everything else and I think that's become harder over the years as I got more responsibility at work (Interview 16, 52:49 – 58:30).

For Miss Mazhar the impact of her career on her faith, encapsulated in the difficulties of observing prayer, prompted powerful theological reflections:

> I think about it in the sense are we putting like things like the internet, work and things like that on a pedestal, and are we treating like work and our social life as God in a way. In that sense, y'know we are committing *shirk* but... for example if you think about praying - a lot of people would try to do it really quickly, like 5 times a day they'll do it, but they'll do it in like super-speed motion. Whereas if you look at the time we spend commuting, time we spend working, time we spend with our friends, have we really... Y'know we say there is one God but are we really embodying that aspect in our lives and our actions? (Interview 2, 33:00 – 33:41).

Miss Mazhar's reflection reveals feelings of compromise underpinning the pragmatic approach to prayer. The idea that she was committing *shirk*[20] by placing her work before God is a seemingly fascinating contemporary dilemma. After this discussion I had the sense that maybe she was making the most out of a difficult situation, but that this was taxing on her faith. This insight is important to recognise, as it reveals how tensions between their identity-attributes can be experienced as subtle and gradual phenomena, becoming increasingly difficult and wearisome over time, rather than glaring incompatibilities and moments of conflict. It could be argued that my perception of the participants' general acceptance and legitimisation of a pragmatic approach to prayer belies this underlying, gradual build-up of tension. If so, this again speaks to the subtlety of the repertoire of

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[20] *Shirk* is the association of God with others, and so committing idolatry by transgressing *tawhid* (Oneness) of God. Its meaning has broadened throughout Islamic history to encompass claims of blasphemy, or 'insufficient "purity" in thought and practice' (O'Connor, 2009 p. 344).

Muslimness in which I am considering.

Whilst they may not have been able to pray themselves, facilitating the prayer of Muslim pupils was a way they could participate, seemingly living 'vicariously' through them (see Chapter 5). Their own classrooms were domains that they had control over and so they could determine its use. As such, participants felt able to offer the use of their classrooms as prayer spaces for Muslim pupils in school, who would often come to see them anyway to discuss matters of religion. There was a sense from the participants that SLTs and pupils thought that because these were RE classrooms, it was an appropriate use, as "something to do with religion" (Mr Jones, fieldnotes 6, June 2017, p. 9). This highlights another synergy between their specific subject and their faith from a spatial perspective. Miss Memon had made this provision an important part of her role modelling:

> Like for example during lunchtime if students wanted somewhere to pray like I've brought prayer mats I can pray my classroom, so at lunchtimes and what not I have students coming in saying "Is there anywhere to pray?" - and they just come into my classroom… They just came to me because they saw I was a Muslim and it was an RE classroom, so from then on I just brought in a prayer mat, I just keep in the cupboard, and when the students come in now they know to get that out and they do start praying (Interview 15, 1:17:42 – 1:25:00).

Similarly, during my fieldwork with Miss Aziz I saw a male Muslim Maths teacher lead *jummah* prayer in the library. When I enquired about this, she explained how she and the Maths teacher had started "Muslim initiatives" in the school, but that it was strictly "for their [the pupils'] benefit" (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 29). In a later conversation with the Head Teacher, she spoke of permitting these initiatives that Miss Aziz created because "they knew about these things" (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 29). Miss Aziz also mentioned that she had "lobbied" for a prayer space in the school's new annex that was being built, even though she "wouldn't use it herself" (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 13). Again, this raises the issue of staff representation and the capacity of Muslim teachers to bring the religious needs of pupils to the awareness of SLTs, but also, if needs be, to implement them themselves. Facilitating prayer also highlights their capacity to incorporate aspects of Muslimness into their professional work vicariously through supporting the religious needs of Muslim pupils.

## 6.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented an exploration of how the participants engaged in boundary-work between their personal faith and professional role. This primarily involved manipulating their framing and footing as Muslims and as RE teachers, often moment-by-moment, within their school and classroom contexts. The participants demonstrate a wide array of practices and tactics for achieving this, enabling them to maintain the positions that they wish to adopt in their teaching. These tactics include diverse pedagogical styles, occupying other roles in addition to their role as RE teachers, and developing pragmatic narratives about observing ritual practice.

Building upon the account of agency in the previous chapter, the participants' identity work presented here demonstrates how this sophistication and fluidity is achieved in practice. By manipulating the boundary between the personal and professional, and sometimes dissolving the boundary itself, they can occupy different ontological positions at specific moments within the social milieu of the school. This affords them the agency to be who they want to be at that given moment, enabling them to achieve both their values and practices as an educator and their values and practices as a Muslim. Moreover, their boundary-work seems to develop over the course of their teaching careers, and is therefore something that is worth considering in relation to RE ITT.

I advocate a bricologic notion of identity construction to conceptualise this complex and fluid identity work. Their skill in shifting their footing instantaneously and fluidly, and weaving together their faith and professional frameworks, demonstrates a capacity to play with their understandings of being Muslim and being an RE teacher in order to bring them together coherently. As Freathy et al. (2017) have highlighted, the open pedagogical and professional frameworks of RE affords teachers greater freedom in shaping how they teach, acting as 'pedagogical bricoleurs' in their practice. Similarly, as McGuire (2008) has noted, the participants seemed to "fit" their notions of Muslimness into their professional requirements and duties as RE teachers, in order to attend to the spiritual in their everyday practice. This has resulted in a new repertoire of Muslimness that is more implicit, synergising with their work. By understanding their faith not just as visible symbols or practices, but also as the values and ethos that they bring as Muslims to their work, they have infused their non-confessional work with their faith. The fact that many saw their work as an extension of their faith in some way is a powerful statement of how Muslimness can be coherent with 'secular' professional frameworks and practices, just as Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013) have shown in the case of Muslim chaplains and Cadge and Konieczny (2014) have demonstrated with religious actors generally. Bricolage conceptually allows for such fluid and contextually created expressions of religious identity by emphasising its socially constructed, contingent, and pragmatic nature. This

perspective captures the participants' capacity to incorporate resources from these two repertoires of meaning together and create new possibilities of being from this synthesis.

Accordingly, the accounts of Muslimness presented here further problematise the prevailing image of Muslimness in the literature. The wider literature has privileged "official" repertoires of the Islamic tradition by attending to typical, and visible, symbols of Muslimness. The lived religion approach, with its capacity to broaden out ways of being religious, allows for the articulation of more subtle and hidden ways of being Muslim that may, on the face of it, look not "Islamic" at all. As McGuire (2008, Chapter 2) argues, this focus allows us to question how scholars and "official" authorities have constructed the category of 'religion'.

In this way, the findings in this chapter resonate with Jeldtoft's (2011) work with 'non-organised' Muslims. Her (2011, p. 1136) study was similarly concerned with 'how Muslims as minorities make sense of Islam in their everyday lives and practices', by drawing on McGuire's notion of lived religion. Jeldtoft (2011, p. 1138) captures the ways her participants made Islam 'work' for them in the varied contexts of their everyday lives. She (2011, p. 1141) found that her participants' notions of Islam were reconfigured as an 'internalised value system', 'pragmatic', and through 'non-practice', in order to "fit" their faith within their social contexts. These three aspects are exemplified in the above accounts. The participants similarly understand their faith as an ethos underpinning their work, reconfiguring their faith as internalised value system. This fostered a sense of Muslimness that was not bound to explicit practices, but leant more toward the infusion of their work with a sense of spirituality. Ritual practices, such as prayer, were also approached with a degree of pragmatism, pencilled in alongside their lunchtime duties. Thus, as Jeldtoft (2011, p. 1143) puts, these 'non-organised' Muslims challenged the "official" repertoire of Muslimness to make their faith their own:

> The practices have been adapted to fit into everyday life. They are spiritual because they provide the interviewees with a space of their own to practise Islam on their own terms.

However, the accounts here suggest something more fundamental than just a pragmatic engagement with practice that Jeldtoft (2011) suggests, but toward a reconfiguration of what it means to be Muslim. Their work, which they do every day, has a significant impact on the general instauration of their faith. I have alluded to this in the previous chapter, with the suggestion of a 'feedback loop' between their understanding of their faith from their perspective as an RE teacher and from their perspective as a Muslim. The findings here further this claim, by demonstrating how their teaching practice changed how they understood and embodied their Muslimness. Here, this can be seen in the emphasis on their character and actions as teachers as a reflection of their

Muslimness. Therefore, and in line with Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013), I would advance Jeldtoft's (2011) argument by claiming that these workplace identity constructions are revealing new ways of being Muslim in Britain that appropriate these 'secular' resources into its bricolage.

I do urge caution in determining the extent to which the participants freely constructed themselves in this way, or how unproblematic this reconfiguration was. As captured in the existing literature, processes of racialisation and racism do impact the extent to which these participants could practice their faith. This was particularly pronounced in the case of alcohol, mentioned briefly in the previous chapter. There is also consistent frustration with the perceived lack of accommodation by schools with regards to prayer. However, the participants were also wary around raising these concerns to SLTs who might construe them as "causing a fuss", particularly if they were the only Muslim in school, raising the issue of representation. From this, there seems to be a need for guidance on best practice with regards to facilitating ritual observance for Muslim staff (and likely those of other faiths too), similar to the *Creating a Faith-Friendly Workplace for Muslims* (EHRC, 2016, pp. 11-12) guidance document. The religious expectations placed upon them by Muslim pupils also limited how and to what extent they could express their Muslimness. These tensions are explored further in the proceeding chapter.

For some, the difficulties in attending to ritual observation also prompted some eschatological reflection. Miss Mazhar's concern over whether the time commitment she gave to her work over her faith was a form of *shirk,* again raises the notion of tensions between these identity attributes. Throughout the discussion of the findings in these last two chapters, I have alluded to such tensions between their frontstage practice and backstage personal beliefs as moments of compromise that required negotiation. Here, the development of practical narratives grounded in the Islamic tradition were valuable tactics that constructed their work and faith as coherent. However, there were tensions that could not be so easily negotiated, limiting what could be incorporated into their bricolage. I now go on to discuss these tensions to consider the limits of their bricolage identity construction.

# Chapter 7: Tensions, Tactics, and "Making Do"

The previous chapter explored the participants' practice as 'Muslim RE teachers', where I argued for a bricologic understanding of their identity construction. It was argued that their boundary-work allowed them to occupy different positions at different moments, facilitating multiple ways of being. This involved fluid and creative syntheses of resources from the repertoires of both their faith and their pedagogy, developing a more implicit and subtle expression of Muslimness. Their capacity to play with the codes of Muslimness and the RE teacher led me to argue for a bricologic notion of identity to capture this creativity and fluidity, and the weaving of these repertoires into a single workplace identity. This went beyond a reconfiguration of practice, as Jeldtoft (2011) argues, to a practical reconfiguration of their Muslim identity itself in terms of the specific working context that they are in. In doing so, this discussion shed new light on the capacity for Muslims to incorporate their faith into the roles they occupy in the British public sphere.

Yet there were limits to this construction. Throughout the findings I have alluded to areas in which bricolage was limited, such as their racialised construction as Muslim by others (see Chapter 5). There has also been mention of the compromise of their Muslim identity in certain moments, echoing the 'threat of profanation' experienced by Muslim teachers alluded to in the wider literature. However, engagement with these sites of tension has been largely overlooked, or reduced to matters of 'race'. Therefore, in seeking to provide a comprehensive account of the identity work that these participants engaged in, and having presented the synergies between their faith and their work, it is also necessary to explore these tensions. Exploration of these tensions reveals the difficulties that the participants experienced in managing their professional duties and requirements whilst maintaining the integrity of their faith, often revealing an otherwise hidden eschatological dimension to their identity work. In some instances, this limited the expressions of Muslimness that they could incorporate into their teacher identities. In response, to manage these tensions the participants had developed a sophisticated array of tactics in order to "make do" in these moments.

Accordingly, in this chapter I explore these tensions and negotiations, addressing the third research question:

## 3. To what extent, and in what ways, do these identities conflict?

I begin this chapter with a restatement of what is meant by a 'tension', as noted in the Methodology, and also introduce the term 'tactics'. I then move on to discuss a significant site of tension: the topic of homosexuality. By exploring the ways homosexuality presented tensions between aspects of the

participants' faith and professional role, and how they experienced these tensions, I uncover competing processes that limit the construction of themselves as 'RE teachers who happen to be Muslim'. Specifically, I draw attention to the previously hidden eschatological dimension of Muslims occupying these 'secular' public sector positions. I then explore the tactics that these participants employed to manage these tensions in their daily practice. This chapter then concludes the exploration of the findings, enabling a closing discussion, in the final chapters, about the broader implications of my research.

## 7.0 'Tensions', 'Tactics' and Bricolage

In this section I conceptualise what is meant by 'tensions' and 'tactics' in terms of the wider theoretical framework of this study. I consider 'tensions' to be sites which draw attention to the limits of coherent bricologic identity construction in terms of the religious and cultural resources which actors can comfortably incorporate into its construction. This definition draws heavily on Altglas's (2014b, p. 11) framework of religious bricolage that underpins this study, which 'draws attention to the processes that make "available" [or "unavailable"] cultural and religious resources for their appropriation'. 'Tactics' concern how these tensions are negotiated by individuals within and against the dominant repertoires they are situated within. The term 'tactic' evokes the kind of cunning and creativity that are employed to "outwit" these structural forces. Incorporating an exploration of tactics has allowed me to explore how the participants dealt with tensions, which is surprisingly lacking in the literature.

As discussed in the Literature Review, research concerning Muslim teachers has been overwhelmingly concerned with such tensions and challenges. But this discussion has been largely reduced to issues of 'race' and racism, given that the study of Muslim teachers is predominantly situated within the wider BME teacher field. These studies have drawn attention to the ways Muslims are racialised in their role as teachers, based on certain visible Muslim traits, and are then subject to systemic covert, overt, and institutional racism, which presents numerous barriers to their career progression and retention (Mogra, 2013; Shah & Shaikh, 2010). Thus, issues of 'race' have already been conceptualised as a tension in the identity construction of Muslims in school. Of specific importance to this study is Benn's (2003) notion of 'identity stasis': that racism prevents Muslim teachers from actually being Muslim in school. Although I have critiqued this notion by suggesting it is too focussed on visible Muslim traits, it remains a powerful way of articulating how 'race' and racism limits the capacity for Muslims to incorporate the visible aspects of Muslimness into their workplace bricolage.

Given the prevalence of 'race' and racism in the existing literature, I have decided to eschew discussion of 'race' and racism as a site of tension in the present study in order to focus on other, more implicit sites of tension that are not currently engaged with in scholarship. In part, this is due to the practical constraints of the thesis, as I could not do justice to the complexities of their experiences of 'race' and racism as well as pursue this new avenue of inquiry. Another reason is that the experiences of racism expressed by the participants in this study are broadly comparable to that already captured in the literature. Issues of 'race' and racism were certainly experienced by these participants, especially in relation to their visibility (see Chapter 6), and I intend to engage with this discussion in papers beyond this thesis. Hence, I urge the reader to keep these tensions in mind. Additionally, there will be little discussion of *Prevent* and FBVs in this chapter. Again, this is partly due to the focus of inquiry but also this reflects the 'narratives of continuity' in the lives of these teachers, as I noted in Chapter 5.

### 7.0.1 Conceptualising Tensions

So far, I have emphasised the fluidity and eclecticism of the participants' identity work, which have led me to a bricologic notion of identity. Bricologic approaches to identity have traditionally focussed on these dynamics within the theoretical context of postmodern selfhood, lending itself toward this analysis (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, pp. 11-15). However, increasingly, and particularly within the theoretical scholarship surrounding British Muslim identity, there has been concern that this focus on eclecticism misses some of the limitations of identity construction that Muslims experience.

In the Methodology, I noted that Altglas (2014a, 2014b) offers a fruitful way to acknowledge these critiques from within the concept of bricolage. She (2014a) suggests that revendicating the notion of coherence can revitalise these limitations in accounts of bricolage. Coherence adds directionality to the construction of religious identity, orientated toward the norms and values of the repertoires of meaning-making (2014a, p. 486). However, because bricolage is socially constructed within specific contexts, actors can be forced to incorporate various resources into their bricolage, which may not necessarily cohere with these religious repertoires. Thus, coherence allows for the possibility of tensions and contradictions between resources that must be appropriated (Altglas, 2014b, p. 118).

Specifically, considering tensions reveals underlying intersecting processes and logics that limit what resources *can* be appropriated and how they can be held together (Altglas, 2014a, p. 490). There are 'pre-constraints of meaning' that limit the extent to which resources can be hermeneutically renegotiated and interpreted (2014a, p. 487). 'Pre-existing sociocultural logics' organise bricolage according to cultural and social 'norms, meanings and intents' (2014a, p. 488). Existing 'asymmetric

power-relations' limit what can be appropriated in a bricolage by preventing and enforcing certain ways of being, notably through the effects of 'race', gender, and class (Altglas, 2014a, pp. 487-488). In response, these tensions prompt actors to resist or uphold dominant structures, synthesise and create new religious identities (Altglas, 2014a, p. 481), or simply hold them in contradiction (Hadfield & Hayes, 1993, p. 169). As such, these processes and logics structure coherent bricolage, limiting eclecticism in its construction.

These processes exemplify what are meant by tensions in the present study. I have argued that these participants engaged in boundary-work between their Muslim and RE teacher identities to construct this bricolage, constantly, and fluidly, moving footing, to construct and embody the 'RE teacher who is Muslim'. Here, the desire to achieve coherence between their Muslim and RE teacher identity-attributes, underpinned by the processes of pre-constraints of meaning, sociocultural logics and power-relations, occasionally limit their capacity to do this comfortably. Thus, these tensions, as well as synergies, shape these participants' identities in their school contexts.

### 7.0.2 Conceptualising Tactics

Given the spiritual and social challenges these tensions raised, the participants had developed several 'tactics' to manage them in their everyday working practice. Tactics, according to Woodhead (2016, p. 15), drawing on de Certeau (1984), are ways in which actors negotiate their faith within, and against, the dominant, strategic modes of power that articulate religion in their contexts:

> This does not mean that they are powerless, but that their power operates in a
> different mode from that of the powerful – a tactical rather than strategic mode.
> They duck and dive, think on their feet, turn and weave. A tactic, according to de
> Certeau, 'is determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the
> postulation of power' (1984: 38, italics original). But contrary to a narrow Foucault-
> inspired position, the tactical does not merely practice arts of 'resistance': it can be
> highly creative and constructive in what it does with the structures and strategies in
> terms of which it operates: 'sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways
> of "making do".

This notion of tactics captures the way in which these participants engaged in 'selective (and uncomfortable) processes of negotiation and interpretations' in their attempt to create a coherent bricolage. These tactics are creative, 'sly', and often hidden ways of outmanoeuvring and reconfiguring the various conflicting authorities in which they are positioned. Whereas previously I have highlighted the capacity of participants to "fit" their faith within their roles as RE teachers, the spiritual and social tensions that the topic of homosexuality presented shifted the focus to "making

do". Importantly, as Woodhead (2016) emphasises, the perceived marginalisation of their faith-position produced a creative space in which they could engage in these new negotiations and interpretations.

## 7.1 Sites of Tension in the RE Classroom

Wider scholarship has tentatively raised ways in which British education, and RE, can present potential sites of tension with Muslim beliefs in the classroom. Muslim organisations have clashed over the perceived underlying 'secular' ethos of multi-faith RE, in which belief in God is not assumed, as well as the requirement for the RE curriculum to be 'mainly or broadly Christian' (Nielsen 2004, pp. 59, 61). Ipgrave's (1999) work draws attention to the challenges Muslim pupils face in the RE classroom when required to be critical of their faith or consider other positions toward the notion of God. She (1999, p. 151) also highlights the conflicts of power between official curriculum knowledge and the indigenous responses of Muslim pupils in their own understanding of their faith. Scholarship pertaining to Muslim teachers has also tentatively raised the ways their faith is compromised in the role, by the perceived requirement to hold and express beliefs contra to their own (Benn, 2002; Benn et al., 2011; Sanjakdar, 2013; Scott-Baumann, 2003). This is also present in the RE teacher literature more widely, further alluding to the tensions that teachers face in managing their own faith whilst also embodying the neutral RE teacher position (Bryan & Revell, 2011; Everington, 2016).

The participants in this study experienced this gamut of tensions with their work as RE teachers in their school contexts. Four themes emerged in the data that were particularly problematic: homosexuality, undermining the Oneness of God (*shirk*), criticality, and alcohol. These were aspects of their role that were seen as incompatible with their identity as Muslims. However, various professional, policy, and social dynamics put pressure on them to appropriate these attributes within their bricolage. As such, these sites prompted considerable reflection and negotiation.

In the proceeding discussion, I have decided to focus on one of these sites - homosexuality - to better elucidate these processes. Homosexuality has been chosen because alcohol, criticality, and to a lesser extent *shirk* (see Chapter 6, p. 134), have been mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6. Moreover, tensions surrounding views on homosexuality reflect a wider fault line between Muslim and British sensibilities in the public sphere (Ipsos Mori, 2018). Within education, there has been ongoing debate surrounding the 'ideological interface' between Muslims and liberal education, in which homosexuality is at its epicentre (Halstead & Lewicka, 1998; Merry, 2005). Debate surrounding the

repeal of Section 28[21] has been met with outrage by a number of religious organisations, notably the Muslim Council of Britain, who rejected the repeal claiming it would be 'deeply offensive to Muslims' (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2015, p. 4). There are also uncertainties surrounding the legal requirements of recognising diverse sexual orientations, enshrined within the National Curriculum, Sex and Relationships education (SRE), and in RE itself, with a school's right to deliver sex education according to their religious ethos (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2015, pp. 2-9). These uncertainties have been exacerbated with the inclusion of FBVs as a requirement for all public-sector professionals to uphold, particularly the value of promoting 'mutual respect and tolerance' (Lander 2016). The precariousness of expressing negative views are encapsulated in the case of Vicki Allen (Finnigan, 2016), who received a formal written warning after declaring that she disapproved of gay marriage on the grounds that it breached Equality and Diversity legislation, but which was ultimately overturned. In contrast, teacher Robert Haye (Press Association 2013), who also 'condemned a homosexual lifestyle', was barred from the profession on the grounds that his comments were 'not part of the modern British values of tolerance'.

Sanjakdar (2013) highlights homosexuality as a significant site of tension in the experience of Muslim teachers working in Australian Islamic Schools. She (2013, p. 26) writes that:

> … for many Muslim teachers teaching about sexuality is a significant intellectual and practical challenge. The pedagogical challenges become amplified when discussing homosexuality. Teachers' decisions about pedagogy were closely linked to the overwhelming discord and opposition they felt towards modernity and the influences of the West. Their challenge lay in developing pedagogical practices that supported the perspectives of sexuality within Islamic doctrines and which would serve as a counter-argument to western perspectives perceived to be corrupting the natural law of sexuality. Deconstructing the teachers' lines of conversations revealed a more complex pattern of associations between sexual meanings, levels of religiosity and various understandings of their role as Muslim teachers. A closer examination of the teachers' pedagogical propositions also revealed their angle of engagement with sexual politics, their knowledge of a range of social-based and cultural-based forces influencing their decision-making and a concern for certain issues.

Sanjakdar's (2013) account bears the hallmarks of tensions described by Altglas (2014a) above. Muslim teachers felt an 'overwhelming discord' with their own beliefs, when teaching about

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[21] The clause that prevented LEAs from 'intentionally promote[ing] homosexuality or publish[ing] material with the intention of promoting homosexuality' (HM Government, 1988b).

homosexuality, echoing a sense of incoherence. Their 'pedagogical propositions' reveal the subsequent limitations on the positions they can adopt in their teaching, constrained by their beliefs, and a range of 'social-based and cultural-based forces', which reflect underlying hermeneutical and pre-existing Muslim sociocultural logics. However, these pressures also contend with their 'understandings of their role as Muslim teachers', demonstrating the power of their professional frameworks and the requirements that this places upon them. As a result, these teachers were challenged with 'developing pedagogical practices that supported the perspectives of sexuality within Islamic doctrines' in their work. Although, Sanjakdar (2013, p. 27) remains skeptical of these pedagogies in terms of their requirements as teachers to encourage all to 'engage in the politics and practices of equality', instead 'strengthening the privileged position of heterosexuality' in their teaching.

Consequently, the experience and management of the topic of homosexuality by these participants reflects in microcosm wider dilemmas many Muslims face entering the British public sphere. It is a playing out of the conflict between two protected characteristics, and they are on the ground of this social, political, and policy fault line, trying to make sense of it in the milieu of the classroom. Hence, these perspectives are invaluable toward understanding the impact of negotiating such complex and seemingly paradoxical identities in society. Focussing on homosexuality therefore reflects a nexus of tensions between faith, professionalism, wider educational policies, and social norms.

I wish to stress that this is the perspective of the current discussion. My focus is on how these tensions were experienced by the participants as raised by them in the interviews and shadowing. I am aware of the highly charged political oeuvre of such discussions currently, and it is not my intention to engage with this explicitly here. As such, I have avoided straying into normative discussions surrounding theology and hermeneutics beyond participants' own interpretative engagement, in keeping with the lived religions approach. Nor have I ventured into discourses surrounding liberal and illiberal views for similar reasons, as I am not considering what *should* be the case. Thus, the use of homosexuality as a topic here is not a subtle support or critique of such 'traditional' views, nor do I suggest that it is only Muslim teachers that experience these tensions. Rather, it is an attempt to engage with what was a serious site of tension in the participants' accounts and an avenue of exploration that has previously been overlooked.

## 7.2 Homosexuality

The participants in this study generally held the view that homosexuality was impermissible. This position was primarily asserted through their understanding that the Qur'an views homosexual acts

as sinful.[22] From the discussions with the participants there were clear constraints of meaning surrounding the hermeneutical positions that these participants could adopt toward homosexuality. They were also keenly aware of views on homosexuality within their Muslim communities, and these sociocultural logics also informed this position. Hence, these views surrounding homosexuality were among the most consistent features of Muslimness that the participants expressed.

As such, when I asked them about potential tensions between their faith and their work, homosexuality was also consistently raised as something that they had to reflect upon. From my perspective it felt as though the participants were anticipating such questions, suggestive of its prevalence within their experience. In their discussions of homosexuality, the participants' expressed their desire to maintain their alignment with their interpretations of revealed moral and ethical demands, reflecting their agency as Muslims. This heightened their awareness of God's presence in the classroom, and God's witness to their speech and action. Some of the participants felt that espousing such a positive message was potentially promoting a sinful way of life, which they would be held accountable for on the day of judgement. There were also fears that their speech may lead to pupils accepting homosexuality, particularly Muslim pupils, for which they would be responsible on judgement day. Hence, discussions of homosexuality prompted serious eschatological concerns from the participants. Mrs Ahmed reflected on this concern:

> Like I said more the fact that I feel that, is it some sort of blasphemy? And that's like one of the ultimate sins. Is it blasphemy? Is it something that I'm saying which is completely wrong? Am I putting ideas into someone's head? I mean another example which - I mean please don't take this personally at all or anything - is when it comes to, which is more apparent now, is... the fact that when we have to discuss homosexuality, yeah? And I know people would find it difficult to teach - now initially I used to find it very difficult to teach. And then I used to say, to the point where I would say, "Okay what's wrong? Is there anything wrong about that?" And I used to say that, and I used to think, am I putting things into their head? Y'know to Muslim students especially. 'Cos I think that they see me as a Muslim, they see me as a role model, and I'm actually saying this, yeah? So, if I'm saying this how are they perceiving this question? Do they think I'm saying it's right? I think sometimes they do question me, they say "Miss does that mean you think that it's right?"
> (Interview 3, 1:48:54 – 1:51:21)

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[22] Although, there was some recognition that the Qur'an is not "black and white" about it (Mrs Waheed, Interview 5, 54:35 – 56:56).

Concerns surrounding the teaching of homosexuality revealed a distinct eschatological dimension to the participants' accounts. There was a sense of uneasiness around potentially advocating the permissibility of homosexuality, which could be understood as an unacceptable transgression in the form of "some kind of blasphemy". The striking implication of this transgression is that it is their soul that is seemingly at stake in their work. Understandably, this intensified the concerns surrounding these tensions in their work, revealing a new transcendental projective dimension to their agency as teachers. By this I mean their concerns reflect not only short- and long-term goals with regard to this world, i.e. over the course of their careers, but also was projected toward the afterlife and the achievement of goals in relation to this. This is a fascinating extension of the ecological model of teacher agency in the case of religiously committed teachers, who act contextually in terms of the transcendent as well as the corporeal. The implications of teaching Muslim pupils are again important to note, here distinct from the sociocultural pressures placed upon them (discussed in the next section), as an explicitly religious tension that complicates their position as role models. Again, this problematises their *de facto* positioning as role models by virtue of their Muslimness, as Carrington and Skelton (2003) critique.

For some of the participants this aspect of their faith was problematic in itself. Their personal tension with this repertoire of their faith was opened up by their work as RE teachers, prompting further reflection on what they believed. Miss Abbas reflected on struggling with this aspect of her faith:

> Yet again the same thing with the sexism, part of the Bible or part of the Qur'an will say don't lie with a woman as you do with a man or whatever, or whatever the quotes are, that annoys me that because I think if religion - I have the same problem that the kids do if religion teaches peace then they would not write things like that, they would not single people out like that, do you know what I mean, and this is where my annoyance comes from and this is where my confusion comes from. What am I then? What do I believe in? Because there are parts I agree with and parts I don't and this is like the laws in the religion and the rules they talk about I don't agree with because I think they are so outdated I think you just need to move with the times and just get over it (Interview 11, 1:12:28 – 1:24:00).

Miss Abbas' reflections are particularly interesting because they reveal a degree of interpretation of Islam that is not present in many accounts. Here she is aware of the normative position of Islam toward homosexuality, but it "frustrates" and "confuses" her, so she "chooses" not to follow it. She, and a number of others, felt legitimised to develop their own interpretations of Islam and make their

faith their own, especially if it did not agree with their personal view. It is possible that their position as RE teachers, with experience of critical, academic engagement with religion, and as experts in terms of their knowledge of other religions may give them a sense of authority to play with these meanings. Moreover, there was no theological justification for this, nor recourse to any scholars, Islamic or otherwise, in making these interpretations. Exercising this kind of agency to make Islam 'their own' is also present in Jeldtoft's (2011) work with 'non-organised' Muslims, who made little recourse to official sources of meaning to reconfigure their faith. Thus, there is some suggestion here of the capacity in which the participants were making their own theological and hermeneutical engagement with belief without turning to the official cores of Islam, as typically espoused, to navigate tensions, particularly "in the moment". In this way, the immediacy of the tensions that the participants' experienced offers an interesting perspective on how they could reflect and negotiate, limiting the resources they could draw upon. It could also reflect a growing trend toward more liberal views of homosexuality among younger British Muslims (Ipsos Mori, 2018). As such, in these small number of cases there was little tension between the topic of homosexuality and their faith.

This articulation of the impact of transcendent authority in the construction of social actors' identities is significantly absent in the literature. Here their relationship with God fundamentally shaped the way they were teachers by limiting what positions they could adopt toward the topic of homosexuality. Yet this kind of impact has not been captured in the wider literature, with its blindness toward the spiritual aspect of these social identities, even if these spiritual aspects are similarly socially constructed. This is significant because these teachers experienced a conflict of this-worldly and transcendent authority in the classroom.

### 7.2.1 Power-relations

Overall, there was a incompatibility between their religious beliefs surrounding homosexuality and their values as non-confessional RE teachers. The general perception was that they had to espouse acceptance of homosexuality as part of their role, to foster tolerance, openness, and acceptance in a post 9/11 RE context (see Moulin 2012), and in line with promoting FBVs, reflecting the exercise of power from this professional framework. Content surrounding homosexuality in the RE curriculum required these teachers to cover religious debates on homosexuality, forcing them to present its acceptance as a potentially valid viewpoint and to present religious arguments on both sides, without expressing their own view. Furthermore, given the proximity of RE to schools' PSHCE and SMSC developments, these teachers were often called upon to discuss and lead school-wide initiatives to combat homophobia (see Miss Aziz, fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 20-21). These uncertainties were further compounded by wider educational policy and the 'grey area' surrounding Muslim RE teachers' beliefs in relation to them (see Everington 2014). There was uncertainty

surrounding how expressing "traditional" or "conservative" views would sit within both Equality and Diversity legislation as well as the Teachers Standards, potentially representing a breach of their contract. Moreover, although the data suggests that the participants generally did not see *Prevent* and FBVs as impacting their practice, in this instance the value of fostering 'mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith' was particularly problematic, especially where RE teachers have been specifically associated with implementing FBVs in schools. As a result, this professional repertoire created the sense that to be an RE teacher was to be accepting of homosexuality.

In this way, the power of these participants' professional frameworks limited what they could express in their school contexts, arguably to that of a liberal and tolerant position. The participants felt anxious about expressing "traditional" or "conservative" Islamic beliefs surrounding homosexuality, framed as a potential breach of their professional conduct as RE teachers. As Miss Loonat spoke:

> So y'know when it comes to concepts about homosexual relationships and things like that y'know it's like "Miss do you accept gays?". And I go they are human beings, and so I respect them like any other person, regardless of whatever religion they follow, whatever their orientation they follow, at the end of the day each to their own, and you've gotta be respectful - everyone is part of society. So, I try and dodge it in that sense so it's not me implicating myself and them going "You hate gaaays!", or I dunno like, no, but your religion says - it's when they say your religion says, "Blah blah", and I say so do the Catholics, so do the Jews! And they're like "Oh". So, you have to shut them up, so I have to make sure that I am throwing everyone else under the bus as well, that's what it feels like - like Not just uuusss [throws hands up in the air]! It's that comparison - making sure that they constantly find that there's a total link between all 3 religions (Interview 10.2, 4:00 – 6:53).

This anxiety is articulated in Mrs Loonat's vignette as she spoke of avoiding "implicating" herself by expressing such beliefs. The use of the word "implicating" suggesting an avoidance of transgressing these professional boundaries that she is contractually obliged to, in this case failing to foster the FBV of 'mutual tolerance and respect'. Even more problematic, implied by some, was that expressing such "opinions" could mean that they could be reported to *Prevent* (Miss Sumar, Interview 7, 1:17:13 – 1:18:29). Here I agree with scholars that the *Prevent* assemblage exerted a 'soft discursive power' on these teachers in school by securitising certain expressions of their faith (see Farrell, 2016). But these anxieties also seem to be present within the professional discourses of RE, and of

teaching more widely, by its (perhaps unintended) fostering an open and tolerant persona in pursuit of British education's underlying liberal and democratic social and moral aims. Here I am reminded of Barnes' (2006) longstanding critique of phenomenological RE, and its 'multi-cultural' manifestation, which is unable to cope with 'serious commitment' in the classroom because there is no true 'respect for difference'. Similarly, these professional repertoires are seemingly unable to cope with the participants' "conservative" religious beliefs, and so limit the extent to which they can incorporate these within the professional role that they occupy.

Yet, we can begin to see how fundamentally important getting these tensions "right" were for the participants, if their practice impacted the judgement of their souls. Gilliat-Ray et al. (2013, p. 60-61) writes how giving the "right" advice was also important for Muslim hospital chaplains, who shared similar concerns regarding the day of judgement. Here "right" reflected a balance between the needs of their patients but also their duty to God, to be Islamically "right" to avoid such transgression. The importance of navigating this careful balance was further suggested by the clarification that chaplains sought from other chaplains surrounding difficult decisions in an attempt to make sure that they were doing the "right" thing both for their patients and for themselves. Finding this balance was of similar concern here, between the needs of their pupils and their values as educators, but also their duty to God and their values as Muslims. This prompted the development of sophisticated tactics, which are discussed later in this chapter. Yet, in contrast to the chaplains, there was no suggestion that the participants sought advice and guidance from other Muslim teachers or religious leaders on this matter. This perhaps raises a lack of support more generally in terms of networks, which has been noted as a problem in wider BME scholarship (McKenley & Gordon, 2002; McNamara et al., 2009). Although, when I raised the idea of a specific network between Muslim teachers in state schools or 'Muslim RE teachers' this was often dismissed. For example, Miss Sumar laughed at the suggestion when I discussed this with her (Interview 7, 1:35:09 – 1:40:59). This dismissal could reflect their general resistance to their exceptionalism as Muslims, as discussed in Chapter 5.

The tensions that homosexuality presented also required considerable emotional labour from the participants. Emotional labour is about the ways in which professionals must manage and perform their emotions according to the socio-professional norms of their working contexts (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p. 123). As in Everington's (2014) study, the policy 'grey area' of homosexuality evoked anxieties surrounding the place of their beliefs in relation to their wider role, which, as I have discussed above, were intensified by their requirement to embody FBVs. There was also a sense of guilt when expressing these beliefs, as something that "went against the grain" of being an RE teacher. In this sense, this emotional labour became alienating, evoking the sense that they were in

some way outside the wider teaching culture of their schools, and also the wider RE community, because of these beliefs (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p. 123). Therefore, the participants' tactics in dealing with these tensions were a significant part of their development as RE teachers.

Accordingly, discussion of power-relations as a limiting process not only reflected this-worldly authorities but also the authority of the transcendent. The topic of homosexuality seems to elicit a tension between the authority of this-worldly and transcendent authorities, reflecting their agency as Muslims and as RE teachers underpinning the notion of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim'. This helps to elucidate why homosexuality was seen as such a problematic tension by the participants. The eschatological dimension to these accounts intensified their concerns, invoking not only their Muslim identity now but also in terms of its place in the afterlife. As such, there was a sense of irrevocability to these discussions, as the participants were unwilling to acquiesce to the authority of their professional framework over the divine but were also pragmatically aware that it was unwise to do so without some tactical clarification. Yet, despite these eschatological concerns, within the contexts of their schools it did seem that their professional frameworks were prioritised. Thus, in the construction of their teacher identities these "traditional" or "conservative" views seemed to be especially difficult to incorporate.

### 7.2.2 Sociocultural Logics

There were also intersecting sociocultural logics that limited the positions the teachers could occupy. There was a sense in these accounts that expressing their beliefs could cause "conflict", damaging their social relationships in and outside the classroom. The effect is reminiscent of the process of racialisation, with such "outing" serving to deny both their agency as Muslims and as RE teachers over their footing. In part, homosexuality was such a consistent tension because of the RE curriculum itself and the participants' visibility as Muslims. Although content surrounding homosexuality in RE aims to represent a range of views from complete prohibition to acceptance, the representation of Islam within this curriculum tends to focus on the impermissibility of homosexuality (Revell, 2012). In this way, the curriculum "outs" the teacher in the classroom, leading them to field uncomfortable questions about their position from the pupils. As Miss Loonat expressed above, her visible Muslim identity led pupils to ask her whether she "accepted gays", and which, if she didn't "dodge" it, would lead pupils to accuse her of "hating gays". In Miss Memon's case there was an awareness that not accepting homosexuality could be seen as "unfair" by her pupils, which had the potential to damage her relationships with them and lead to challenging incidents in the classroom:

> Oh yeah it was quite challenging, with year 11 teaching about homosexuality,
> and that religions teach that homosexuality is wrong. And they had strong

views, like everyone can be whoever they want to be, so they would be like - one of their tactics would be to throw so many questions at me like, "Okay if religion teaches us to be just and fair then why are they against homosexuality? People choose to be homosexual they are not doing anything or harming anyone?". So from that standpoint I found it quite difficult, because they themselves were telling me about other stuff about religion - that teaches you to be just, so why does it not allow homosexuality? So, I found that quite challenging (Interview 15, 1:04:01 – 1:17:42).

As such, in these discussions social norms seemed to 'other' their beliefs. Again, this also illuminates the underlying liberal normativity of RE within the post 9/11 context.

It was not just social pressures from their pupils but also with other staff as well. Several participants spoke of being interrogated by other teachers with regards to their stance on homosexuality and their teaching of RE or other PSHCE initiatives in their schools. Miss Mahmood recounted an incident in a previous school with a lesbian member of staff and had come into conflict with them over her reluctance to state that homosexuality was acceptable:

But with this older one, she was a lesbian, it made no difference to me, I never, yes… obviously as my religious beliefs, we are against homosexuality. But it's not something that I turned around and said to her ever, like it was never, I never turned or made any sort of slight. I thought to myself, did she think that, maybe my views towards her, caused it? Because you don't know the way some people think do you? Because she tried to be my friend, but you get along with some people, you can't get along with everyone. This is all I was trying to make… Because she wanted my number once, and I just said to her, "Well if it's work related, you can email me on the work email. You don't actually need my telephone number, because that's my personal one, but I don't really want to give it to you". Then she made a big hoo-hah of it, with two other work colleagues, where she walked off and they turned around and said to me, "Oh, you were really harsh then not giving her your number" (Interview 21, 21:05 – 25:32).

This led to social ostracising from the wider staff body, which exacerbated ongoing social difficulties in the school, and led her to quit the post. In many ways, these conversations seemed to be more problematic than those in the classroom as they were more difficult to "dodge" because other members of staff were relating to them on a social rather than professional level and had the authority to question them. The capacity for these teachers to manage their framing and footing in

these conversations was therefore limited, compromising the extent to which they could avoid such conflict. Although this case stands out as one of the more severe, it serves to illustrate the potential personal and professional ramifications that expressing the "wrong" type of beliefs in school can bring, problematising the incorporation of certain aspects of their Muslimness within school.

Furthermore, participants also had to contend with the sociocultural logics of their own Muslim communities in their school contexts. Miss Memon had also been battling with these tensions throughout her time as an NQT. As a visible Muslim in the classroom, she constantly spoke of Muslim pupils "holding her to account" for what she uttered in discussion, and was met with outright condemnation if she said anything that the pupils perceived to be sinful (Interview 15, 1:04:01 – 1:17:42). Much like the above, this centred around Muslim pupils interrogating her on her own beliefs. However, the interrogation from Muslim pupils involved theological critiques and knowledge of Islam, from which judgement was made on whether she was a "bad" Muslim. I witnessed this kind of theological challenging during my fieldwork with Mrs Khan, and how these comments put her in a precarious position between her personal faith and her professional role in the classroom milieu:

> Again, a pupil opened up talk of being gay and marriage. Apparently, a supply teacher said "it wasn't an option" to him, but he argued that it was a choice. I overheard in the background "its haram, not in Islam, not okay". The girls next to me discussed the difference between being and doing – "It's okay isn't it if you don't do anything?". Mrs Khan let the discussion happen. They discussed their own personal study – an example from the worksheets that they had been given – and a pupil explained how gay men, "Still got married and had kids". Another pupil shared a story about a man stopping being gay after Ramadan. Some of the boys began to talk about the pupil who asked the initial question – "You went from Muslim to Quaker to Muslim, then straight back to it. It doesn't make sense!" They were laughing at him. A girl mentioned that he went, "Back to his nature". Mrs Khan still didn't say anything. The lesson then moved on to a discussion about modesty…

> I approached Mrs Khan after the lesson and asked her what she thought of the exchange. She remarked that she didn't want to "go into it" as it would have derailed the lesson. She said that they were there to learn the content and not what she thought. I asked why it would have derailed the lesson, and Mrs Khan, looking uncomfortable, expressed that it's generally not good to say that gay marriage isn't an option, so "it's just easier not to mention it" (fieldnotes

16, March 2017, p. 23-24).

It is revealing how "not mentioning it" was the easiest way to keep both of these aspects of her identity intact.

Thus, potential conflict with the religious expectations of Muslim pupils within their contexts created tensions with their capacity to be RE teachers, and also their faith if these beliefs were different. Regardless of whether Mrs Khan agreed, from her vantage point as an educator offering her perspective was still problematic and could "derail the lesson". Hence, participants continually remarked how this was often *more* difficult to deal with than the interrogations from non-Muslim pupils and staff, and instances of racism and discrimination. These challenges could not be so easily dismissed as "ignorant comments" because often the challenges from Muslim pupils were often seen as theologically informed, or even understood as "correct", especially when the views of Muslim pupils resonated with the participants' own personal beliefs.

The notion of the *Ummah* intensified these tensions. This understanding fostered a sense that the participants and Muslim pupils should be all "in it together", and so, spoken more in the context of criticality, potentially undermining the beliefs of Muslim pupils was in some way perceived to be undermining this sense of brotherhood. There was also some concern about being socially excluded from their wider Muslim community by expressing positive views on homosexuality, regardless if this was because of their teaching, given that the participants often went to the same mosque as some of their pupils, knew the local Imams, and attended the same events. As such, their comments could go far beyond the classroom walls if Muslim pupils went home to discuss the participants' lessons with their parents, or with their local religious leaders. Therefore, for some, these tensions were particularly painful to manage, taken as challenges to their Muslim identity. These challenges fostered a sense that they were not "proper Muslims" because of the beliefs they expressed in their role, and so challenged them personally. Thus, these sociocultural logics put pressure on the participants to express commonly-held Muslim views in the classroom, acting as an inverse to the dominant sociocultural logics enacted by non-Muslim pupils and staff.

The relationship between these participants and Muslim pupils sheds light on the difficulties teachers may face in acting as role models. Although the role model argument is commonly deployed in support of BME teachers, it has faced criticism for being based on a certain essentialised notion of identity (Carrington & Skelton, 2003). Yet this has not been explored in relation to religious identities. Everington's (2014) work does alluded to the perpetuation of a 'Muslim bubble' by Muslim RE teachers sharing their beliefs with Muslim pupils. Here, Muslim pupils seem to struggle to separate these participants from other forms of Islamic leadership they encounter. This is potentially

exacerbated by their positioning as role models, discussed in the previous chapter, as a role in which they felt somewhat comfortable giving religious advice. The apparent conflation of their role as non-confessional RE teachers and religious leaders meant that these participants were expected to act in accordance with the religious expectations of these pupils. This forcefully evoked their Muslim identity into the classroom, limiting the capacity in which they could adopt their footing as neutral RE teachers by exerting pressure on them to align to their views. As such, these Muslim sociocultural logics acted as an inversion to the wider dominant sociocultural logics discussed previously, creating a tension with their goals and desires as educators.

Again, much like the competing regimes of power within which the participants were situated, there were also competing sociocultural logics which they had to manage. On the one hand, the norms of British society constructed by pupils and staff, as well as FBVs, not only exerted a social pressure on what positions toward homosexuality the participants could adopt, but also, in many ways, reflected an intimate part of their professional development in school. On the other, and particularly in contexts with large numbers of Muslim pupils, there were pressures to perpetuate the 'Muslim bubble' by expressing similar signs of Muslimness. This had the similar effect of potentially compromising their identity as Muslims by others in their local community, with potential social ramifications beyond the school gates.

### 7.2.3 Tactics

The participants had developed an array of tactics to negotiate these tensions. One common response was to simply "hide" their beliefs. Miss Medhi spoke of taking this approach to the topic of homosexuality:

> Yeah. To be honest I think sometimes it's good to discuss your own opinions, and sometimes you just leave your opinions out of it. If it's something where there's going to be conflict just don't say anything about it, just don't bring your own self into that kind of topic, because students don't need to know your own personal opinion about everything, or your own personal beliefs. Miss it out, let them learn what they've got to learn, and then the belief stays within you (Interview 9, 54:54 – 1:01:00).

As Miss Medhi advises, to avoid potential conflict "just don't bring your own self into it". This was also used by Mrs Khan above, in her statement that it is "just easier not to mention" her beliefs. This tactic resembles the 'masking' of religious identity described by Moulin (2015, pp. 498 - 499), which religiously committed pupils use to avoid tensions in the RE classroom. Similarly to these pupils, the tactic of "hiding" partly reflects the immediacy of the social milieu of the classroom. Like their use of

code-switching, it was a simple tactic that they could employ in response to questions and comments made in the moment, which forcibly shifted their frame.

The sense of "hiding" or 'masking' their beliefs to avoid conflict is replete with the notion of 'identity stasis', much like Benn (1998, 2003) describes. As both Miss Medhi and Mrs Khan mention, it was "just easier not to mention it". Thus, it could be argued that homosexuality illuminates racialised politics within the classroom, with their Muslimness being positioned against the sociocultural norms of British culture, as constructed by pupils, other staff, and the wider policy frameworks of RE and teaching. I suggest that this explanation has merit, in that uses of 'identity stasis' reflected the participants' desire to not become embroiled in these sensitive politics. There was certainly a sense of anxiety around expressing their beliefs in relation to FBVs, reminiscent of Farrell's (2016) claim that these policies have created a 'constitutive ''outside''. As such, this tactic could be a significant expression of these racialised politics in the RE classroom.

However, I would argue that these racialised politics also extend to their conflation by Muslim pupils. The use of "hiding" faith in this way is encapsulated in the experience of Miss Memon as a way to protect herself from interrogation by her Muslim pupils. Thus, the participants also seem to use 'identity stasis' to avoid conflict with competing expressions of Muslimness in the classroom. Again, here the notion of 'identity stasis' as a response is broadened to both spheres of sociocultural logics that underpin these tensions, with the teachers simply retreating rather than becoming embroiled in these sensitive, and potentially harmful, situations.

The eschatological dimension is also of note here. It could be that "not mentioning it" was a way to ensure that they did not transgress in these moments, particularly if such moments had taken them by surprise. Rather than just a response to these racialised politics, "hiding" could also be a definite way of protecting themselves spiritually. This is pertinent given the perception of the divine that many participants expressed that they felt in the classroom, as witness to their speech and actions. Their capacity to retreat into a neutral, non-confessional space to head off questioning is used as a tactic to avoid compromising their faith. In this way, neutrality, as an aspect of RE professionalism, is an extremely important space that the participants could use to maintain the integrity of their faith. I believe this has important implications for the scholarly critique of the neutral RE teacher. If this space was no longer available, then it is unclear how these participants would manage these tensions. Whilst the ideal notion of neutrality may be 'impossible', it does seem to offer a form of protection to Muslim teachers in which they can keep their faith intact from the plethora of socio-cultural pressures which they are subject to.

It is also interesting to note how these tensions limited their pedagogy. Whilst Mrs Khan was a strong advocate of PLK and regularly included her beliefs in the classroom, there were some topics in which this approach was not feasible. "Not mentioning it" as a way to avoid conflict was also seen by some participants as part of a developed behaviour management strategy, and so, in a way, part of their craft as experienced teachers. Thus, the ability for these participants to deal with these challenging situations was part of the way in which they spoke of their development as teachers. The more experienced teachers had grown more adept at navigating, dodging, and diffusing these situations as they emerged through the course of their teaching. On the other hand, newer teachers, like Miss Memon, seemed to be vulnerable in these situations because they were not as well equipped with tactics to manage them. Again, this revealed a distinct iterative dimension to the experience of these tensions. With these tensions in mind, it is also striking how little discussions of pedagogy consider how difficult they may be to practice in the classroom.

Another interesting tactic was deployed by Miss Loonat above, by "throwing other religions under the bus". This is perhaps a variation on "hiding" her faith by ensuring that she was not seen to be alone in her views. By drawing in the other religions, particularly those the pupils identified with, Miss Loonat was therefore seemingly immune from any specific criticisms or accusations against her, as they could also be levied against other pupils and staff. This is also perhaps a resistance to the privileging of Christianity within the RE curriculum and in FBVs and against its construction as the 'liberal' religion against 'illiberal Islam' (see Revell, 2012). However, the notion of "throwing under the bus" further suggests that, despite this tactic, it was still precarious to express such a belief in the classroom.

The participants had also developed more sophisticated tactics. The most common tactic expressed in the data was through shared notions of "respect", "kindness", and "tolerance". This emphasised that their understanding of homosexuality was framed within the wider context of their commitment to the ethical treatment of others. This approach was used often in conversations with their commitment to breaking stereotypes and with their own understanding of the character of being Muslim. As Miss Bashir explained:

> There is homosexuality and there is being unkind to people, you know, so
> what is the greatest sin you figure out - which is more upsetting to people,
> being unkind, we are all human beings reduced to what they are in our lives,
> we will do as we will just be kind to one another, and respect each other and
> that's more my approach (Interview 12, 38:44 – 48:50).

There is acknowledgement of their own faith position, emphasising their Muslim duty to treat others

with kindness, including those with whom they disagree. In doing so, they draw upon multiple levels of their Muslim identity, resisting the reduction purely to their view on homosexuality by accentuating other aspects of their faith that challenge possible perceptions of their beliefs as homophobic. Again, this demonstrates a capacity for the participants to highlight different aspects of themselves within their contexts, here to break stereotypes by advocating tolerance and respect for others even though they may religiously disagree. This kind of nuance seems to be lacking in many wider debates, much to the frustration of some of the participants, who actively resisted the assumption that disagreement entails discrimination. During my fieldwork with Miss Aziz she drew attention to such frustration in her work with an anti-homophobia campaign, stating that she had tried hard to support the needs of LGBTQ pupils regardless of both Muslim and non-Muslim "staffs' own views" (fieldnotes 19, July 2017, p. 20-21). So, there seemed to be conceptual room to align "traditional" Muslim views on homosexuality with a commitment to FBVs and wider educational initiatives by reference to tolerance and other aspects of their faith.

Others made a subtle distinction between the Islamic tradition and their own views as an individual. Consider the following from Mr Chowdhury:

> You know, they would often ask me, you know, "Well, what's your...? What does your religion say?" And I said, listen, this is what my religion states, you know, it's not a natural... Let's say it's not considered to be a natural relationship. But if you're asking me on a personal level, I don't really have a problem. I think... You know, some of my best friends are lesbian or gay. Do I have a problem with being... That's entirely their own option and their own choice. You know, there are... You know, I would trust certain gay friends that I have, or lesbian friends, or for example, atheist friends, more than I would trust certain Muslims that I know (Interview 18, 27:17 – 37:23).

Here Mr Chowdhury makes a distinction between "what his religion states" and what he believes "on a personal level". This is a fascinating tactic as he makes a distinction between Islam as a wider tradition, and his view as a Muslim actor in society. In doing so, he seemingly occupies a variety of viewpoints at the same time, looking at the Islamic tradition itself but also through his own experience in the world. As I mentioned previously, RE does teach about homosexuality from such positions, seeking to highlight arguments around both the impermissibility and permissibility of homosexuality. It could be argued that this distinction embodies an impartial pedagogy in this way.

By expressing the importance of "choice", Mr Chowdhury also uses the tactic of "respect". Here, this also incorporates the FBV of 'mutual respect and tolerance' by acknowledging that homosexuality is

a legitimate choice within Britain.[23] Interestingly, I saw this tactic advocated by a speaker at the AMS's (2016) *School Leadership Conference*, as a school wide policy to promote FBVs whilst also acknowledging the position of Islam. The emphasis here was on stating the legality of homosexuality in Britain, implying that it was this legality that made it acceptable.

Yet he also makes his position clear that from a religious perspective "it's not considered to be a natural relationship". Finding points of commonality has also been noted by Panjwani (2016) in Muslim teachers' views on FBVs. He finds that it was not FBVs *per se* that were problematic because there was an 'overlapping consensus' with many of their values as Muslims. Rather, it was its implementation that was problematic (2016, pp. 337-338). In this way, some of the participants had 'outmanoeuvred' FBVs by respecting "choice", as opposed to acknowledging homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle, by expressing an 'overlapping consensus' of their values. It also could be seen to draw on their own approach to their faith, as discussed previously, as a "choice" that they make, and encourage their pupils to do the same, by emphasising that this belief is "their belief".

The participants' development of these tactics is important to highlight as it demonstrates how Muslims can negotiate such tensions in their work. I do not believe that these tactics were disingenuous, but rather, as Woodhead (2016) highlights, that these tensions seem to reveal a creative space for new interpretations. In this space the participants have figured out how to "make do" by drawing attention to other aspects of their faith, finding an 'overlapping consensus', or by making a distinction between the Islamic tradition broadly and their own specific view. The idea that they could understand homosexuality as sinful but still advocate respect and kindness reveals a more sophisticated position beyond 'masking' their beliefs. As I have argued throughout, this draws attention to the multiple aspects of their agency, here within a single topic of discussion.

Moreover, I believe illustrating these tactics are important because they offer potential support for other Muslim teachers, and recognise the success of these participants within their profession. Writing this chapter has caused me to reflect on the images of Muslim teachers in the wider literature, within which there is little sense that they are, or can, succeed as teachers. By providing a discussion of tactics as a counter-point to tensions, I have hoped to resist replicating this tendency.

## 7.3 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter my aim was to consider the ways in which these participants experienced tensions between aspects of their faith and their professional role. Through the participants' narratives it emerges that there are aspects of their duties as RE teachers that, at times, sit uncomfortably with their identities as Muslims. Accordingly, this chapter provides further insight into these tensions,

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[23] Although the idea that homosexuality is a choice is heavily contested.

notably the topic of homosexuality and its position both in terms of their professional repertoire and their religious repertoire.

By exploring how these tensions are experienced by the participants in their day-to-day practice, a nexus of intersecting processes were uncovered that limited the construction of their bricolage. On the one hand, the power of their professional frameworks and the sociocultural logics of predominantly non-Muslim school and classroom contexts limited their capacity to express "conservative" or "traditional" Islamic beliefs, such as the impermissibility of homosexuality. On the other, there were pre-constraints of meaning surrounding the impermissibility of homosexuality within the Islamic tradition that limited what they could express as RE teachers. The sociocultural logics of their local Muslim communities also limited their capacity to express liberal and tolerant views toward homosexuality, whether this be from their perspective as an RE teacher, from their own faith, or both.

There were also eschatological concerns that limited what the teachers could express. The eschatological dimension to their identity construction is a significant contribution to the perspective on these teachers. Throughout the findings in this thesis have been allusions to such tensions between the aspects of their role with their own faith, going beyond the topic of homosexuality. As noted in Chapter 6, Miss Mazhar raised the heavy workload of teaching as a potential act of *shirk*, as she felt she was privileging work over her commitment to God (Interview 2, 33:00 – 33:41). These kinds of tensions only make sense if the authority of the transcendent is also considered as a contextual factor of their work, recognising the perception of these participants that God was always witness to their actions, even in the classroom. This has fascinating implications for the notion of ecological teacher agency, broadening the projective dimension into the afterlife.

To manage these tensions and limitations, the participants had developed a sophisticated array of tactics in which to "make do" in their everyday working practice. These tactics again demonstrate the agentic, creative capacity of these participants. The experience of tensions has led to the development of innovative narratives that attempt to bring together these incoherent elements. Therefore, managing these tensions was a significant part of the participants' development as teachers, but has only been tentatively grasped in the literature. As I have begun to show through the discussion of tactics, I tentatively suggest that the creative spaces that these tensions offer are catalysing new perspectives and new ways of articulating Muslimness that are both "traditional" but also incorporate the policy frameworks and ethos of the 'secular' organisations within which they are situated. In this way, and much like their negotiation of the boundaries between the professional

and personal, this looks to move beyond simple dichotomies of 'Muslim' and 'secular' but toward identities that can bridge the two.

However, this discussion has also revealed the liberal ontological norms present within British educational contexts. I would argue that, from the perspective of these participants, there is evidence of a 'liberal anxiety' toward "conservative" or "traditional" beliefs. These anxieties seemed to also be felt by the participants in response, despite the development of tactics.

Having discussed these tensions, I now turn to a discussion of the findings, considering the data across the main research questions and its potential implications for the wider fields of British Muslim studies and RE teaching.

# Chapter 8: Discussion

In this thesis I have sought to explore the experiences and identity construction of 'Muslim RE teachers'. From the literature review of scholarship about Muslim teachers, I identified the need to develop the accounts offered by predominantly 'race'-orientated analyses, or the religious and 'spiritual', in a synthesis that incorporated their actual, day-to-day practice as RE teachers. This led to the formulation of the three main research questions:

1. *What is the relationship between 'Muslim RE teachers'' faith and their professional role in their school contexts?*
2. *How did this identity construction occur in practice?*
3. *Were there any tensions between these attributes of their workplace identities?*

To answer these, I located the study within a lived religion theoretical framework, influenced by scholars of everyday lived Islam. I conceptualised Islam as socially constructed, 'everyday', and lived in the subsequent thematic analysis. Interviews and shadowing with 21 'Muslim RE teachers', conducted within a qualitative methodological framework informed by granular ethnography, formed the data for that subsequent analysis.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that, within their school contexts, the participants saw themselves as both Muslims *and* RE teachers. This is indicative of a synthesis between these two identity-attributes, which is encapsulated in the notion of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim'. This identity work reflects their agentic capacity, as social actors, to achieve their goals as Muslims and as RE teachers. Illuminating the agentic capacity of Muslim actors to orientate themselves toward the other social roles they occupy, within a given context, significantly nuances the current conceptualisations of Muslims in the literature. Particularly within education, I concur with Panjwani (2017) that there has been a tendency to reduce Muslims to their Muslim identity-attribute as 'Muslim first', which I have shown are replete in scholarly discussions of the 'Muslim teacher'. Considering practice further reinforces the above claims. The participants demonstrate considerable skill in managing and manipulating their framing and footing within their school contexts. Their boundary-work allows them to be Muslim and be an RE teacher at different moments, as well as simultaneously, by creating new possibilities of being and new expressions of Muslimness. Their capacity to play with the official repertoires of both their faith and professional role leads me to argue for a bricologic notion of identity, which emphasises fluidity and creativity in

their configuration of aspects of their identity-attributes. Again, the findings nuance notions of Muslimness, which have been found to privilege visible and official signs of the Islamic tradition, by revealing a more implicit and subtle repertoire of actions and behaviours that constitute Muslimness. In turn, I also highlight the continuing importance of the lived and 'everyday' in the study of Muslims, and argue that more work is needed that considers Muslims in the workplace in order to further these insights. However, my discussion of tensions between the identity-attributes of Muslim and RE teacher reveals limits to their construction of coherent bricologic identities. Seen through the sensitive topic of homosexuality, there are moments where the authority of the divine, enshrined in the Islamic tradition, conflicted with the professional frameworks of their role. At the same time, the participants experienced pressure from the competing sociocultural logics of non-Muslim and Muslim communities. In these findings I stress the importance of considering the eschatological dimension of these tensions: how the participants were concerned not only with their faith in this world, but also with a view toward judgement day and the afterlife. This insight is a potentially significant contribution to notions of teacher agency, broadening the projective dimension of agency into the transcendental. It also restates the importance of seeing Muslim identities holistically, actively considering how they attend to the 'spiritual' in 'secular' arenas. The discussion of tactics is important in this regard, illustrating examples of how tensions between the religious and the 'secular' can, to some extent, be overcome.

These findings have significant implications for a number of fields. In this discussion I situate the findings within the wider literature. To do so, I have considered each of the research questions in turn.

## 8.0 What is the Relationship Between 'Muslim RE Teachers'' Faith and their Professional Role in their School Contexts?

The primary research question was to explore how the participants understood themselves as 'Muslim RE teachers' and the relationship between their faith and professional identity-attributes. In the main, the participants' narratives suggest that they saw themselves both as Muslims *and* as RE teachers, with an emphasis placed on their RE teacher attribute as their primary identity in their school contexts. This relationship was encapsulated in their contestation of the label 'Muslim RE teacher' that I initially ascribed to them. These contestations questioned the assumed primacy of the Muslim identity-attribute in the construction of their teacher identities. Rather, there was a general preference for the label 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim'. This label was found to represent the participants' identity-work, which involved the positioning of their faith backstage, in order to embody the neutral, non-confessional RE teacher. Although a small minority of the participants did

resist this, accepting the 'Muslim RE teacher' label, they still engaged in this identity work, and expressed its pedagogical value. Thus, the participants' identity work seemed to be orientated around this notion of neutrality, and the construction and maintenance of a boundary between the professional and personal. The creation of this boundary subsequently revealed their capacity to act according to their agentic goals and desires as Muslims and as educators, orientating themselves toward these repertoires of meaning-making at different moments, and in different ways.

This relationship reveals several significant themes relating to British Muslim identity, and notions of the 'Muslim teacher' and RE teacher professionalism. In this discussion I put these narratives in conversation with representations of Muslims within wider scholarship, particularly the notion of 'Muslim first', as well as scholarly discussions of RE teacher professionalism.

### 8.0.1 Moving from 'Muslim RE Teacher' to 'RE teacher Who Happens to be Muslim'

The participants' narratives seem to problematise scholarly representations of Muslims. These representations have a tendency to conceptualise Muslims as 'Muslim first' (see Shah, 2018). However, this motif does not seem to capture the empirical realities of the participants, and the way they understood and experienced themselves as Muslims and as RE teachers within their school contexts. I believe that the shift from 'Muslim RE teacher' to 'RE teacher who is Muslim' is a significant statement of the identity construction of these participants. Their contestation, and subsequent re-labelling, is a clear statement that they did not view themselves as 'Muslim first' whilst in their role as non-confessional RE teachers. Rather, the data suggests that they primarily understand themselves as educators, and orient themselves in this way.

Through the label 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim', the participants emphasised their capacity to place their faith backstage, and incorporate their faith within the meaning-making repertoire of their professional framework. This capacity to see themselves as educators first is also present in Mogra's (2009) work. As I have discussed, Mogra (2009) similarly finds that his participants were educators first, but that their identities orientated around a 'core' Islamic identity, although his analysis arguably over-determines the impact of theology in the construction of their teacher identities. In the case of one Muslimah (2014), he similarly draws attention to this fluid and sophisticated identity work. The Muslimah was found to weave multiple religious, cultural, and professional, repertoires of meaning-making together to construct a frontstage teacher identity. This identity work is also evocative of Gilliat-Ray et al.'s (2013) claim that Muslim chaplains represent a 'new category of religious actor' in the British public sphere, with their capacity to incorporate Islam within the policy frameworks of 'secular' public institutions. I would argue that the notion of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' is a similar 'new category of religious actor', who is able to incorporate their faith within the 'secular' frameworks of non-confessional RE teaching.

Therefore, I claim that there is a need to move away from static and reductive representations of Muslim teachers, which privilege the Muslim identity-attribute. The shift from 'Muslim RE teacher' to 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' reflects the participants' desire and capacity to be educators in their school contexts. In the wider literature, there is little sense of this desire or any sense of their success in education. In contrast, the participants in this study stressed that they were capable of being non-confessional RE teachers whilst also being Muslim. This was expressed in their general frustration of being reduced to 'Muslim RE teachers', encapsulated in the rhetorical motif of "I'm teaching not preaching". In contrast to the "religious leader", some explicitly stated they were not "Muslim first". This assumption was frustrating because it brought with it a sense that they could not be neutral, non-confessional RE teachers due to their identity as Muslims.

These frustrations reveal how conceptualising Muslim identities as 'Muslim first' has reduced Muslims to their Muslim identity-attribute more widely. Here I strongly agree with Panjwani and Moulin-Stożek (2017) that empirical work is increasingly showing the limits of such identification. Specifically, Panjwani (2017) contends that the 'religification' and 'racialisation' of Muslim identities within this turn has led to two layers of reductionism in its analyses. Religification concerns 'how the identity attribute of Muslimness came to be functionalised as the primary attribute for a large number of people in Britain' (2017, p. 602). A limitation of this attribution is that their entire diversity of being is compressed into the single attribute of 'Muslim' (2017, p. 604), precluding any understanding from other social positions they inhabit. Racialised approaches also reduce Muslims to certain essentialised ways of being (2017, p. 604). Based on concerns with visible markers of identity, a particular image of the 'practicing Muslim' is privileged by virtue of this analytical focus.

In the case of Muslim teachers, we can see how the conceptual trajectories of scholarship within which they are situated has led to such a double reductionism. Firstly, its historical location within BME scholarship has brought with it a methodological preoccupation with racialisation and visible markers of Muslimness. Secondly, through the turn to 'spirituality' by Mogra (2009, 2010, 2014), this has brought an emphasis on theological understandings. Yet neither of these approaches seems to really consider the actual practice of teaching and its professional frameworks within which Muslim teachers are situated, across which to provide a synthesis between these racialised and religified constructions. As such, there is little sense in the research so far for the capacity of Muslim teachers to act as teachers or have educational values and commitments. This is a significant oversight, as my findings demonstrate that it was their practice as teachers that prompted syntheses between their faith and professional role.

An important, yet implicit, impact of the 'Muslim first' discourse is that it seemingly prohibits Muslims from occupying any other positions in their varying contexts. I would tentatively contend that there is a worrying normative edge to this, potentially questioning that being anything other than 'Muslim first' questions the validity of Muslim identities. In many ways, this kind of scholarly discourse is reminiscent of the idealised notion of the "practicing Muslim" that the participants in this study and in Jeldtoft's (2011) alluded to, or the 'pious Muslim subject' highlighted by Schielke (2010). Whilst practice was important to the participants' sense of Muslimness, it was not their only concern. Thus, I contend that by reducing Muslim actors in such a way, scholarship seems to have implicitly conceptualised 'Muslim first' as 'only Muslim': solely concerned with attending to their goals and desires as Muslims.

A significant contribution of this thesis is to highlight these 'religifying' and 'racialising' tendencies of scholarly representations of Muslim actors, and disrupt the assumption that they are 'Muslim first' in every context or in every moment. As Panjwani writes (2017, pp. 605-606), 'no Muslim is just a Muslim', suggesting that 'there is a need to reconsider the primacy of the religious attribute… by humanising Muslims, by taking account of their religio-secular contexts and by reconsidering their varying attachments to religion'. I also advocate a reconsideration of its primacy. From the participants' accounts there are clearly limits to this identification. This is illustrated in the shift from 'Muslim RE teacher' to 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' itself. The participants were able to, and felt comfortable with, positioning and re-positioning their Muslim identity according to the needs of their role, often moment-by-moment in the classroom. However, this did not mean that the participants were suddenly 'not Muslim' by virtue of engaging in this identity work.

Moreover, I suggest my study provides a theoretical and methodological corrective for the above critique. Panjwani (2017) has highlighted above the need to 'humanise' Muslims in this way but offers little in the way of theoretical or empirical solutions for engaging in this reconceptualisation, beyond attending to their contexts and religiosity. I suggest that the theoretical framework employed in the present study, and the insights of lived religion and everyday lived Islam, offer a fruitful way forward in this endeavour. Specifically, I believe that attending to the agency of Muslims as social actors is an important theoretical and methodological contribution. Attending to the agency of Muslims is rarely commented upon in analyses of their identity, nor is it particularly present in the lived religion literature beyond the impetus to attend to the spiritual in their everyday lives (McGuire 2008). The notion of coherence could be a valuable conceptual addition to lived religion in this way. Within the present study, attending to agency, particularly the ecological model of teacher agency (Priestly et. al., 2015), allowed the participants to act as both Muslims and as non-confessional RE teachers. This enabled them to emerge as skilled and reflexive professionals in the analyses, who

have worked hard at their craft and have developed themselves as educators over the course of their careers. Agency allowed for the possibility of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' by acknowledging the participants' general orientation toward their goals and values as educators, within their school contexts, but which was also informed by their backstage values and goals as a Muslim.

Significantly, the move away from being 'just Muslim' seems to touch on emerging discourses of British Muslim identity. There is indication of a developing narrative toward more sophisticated statements of British Muslim identity that highlight the capacity of Muslims to occupy, and succeed in, other social roles. Muslim sporting personalities such as Mo Farah, Mohammad Salah, and Amir Khan, have significantly contributed to this sense of diversifying Muslim identities, being recognised primarily as successful sportsmen who are Muslim, as opposed to being seen primarily as Muslims. Salah's announcement that he would break his fast before his Champion's League final appearance so that it would not affect his game made national news, broadcasting his capacity to prioritise his footballing first over expectations of religious observance (Austin, 2018). This insight pushes Gilliat-Ray et al.'s (2013) claim further, by suggesting that the capacity for Muslims to incorporate their faith into wider 'secular', contextual repertoires of meaning-making is indicative of an emerging trend within British Muslim identities more widely.



Figure 8.1 – *Teacher of Japanese* (Khan, 2018)



Figure 8.2 – *Kickboxer* (Khan, 2018)

Changing narratives surrounding Muslim women are seemingly at the forefront of these developments. Ayesha Khan's (2018) recent exhibition, aptly titled 'the Everyday', has sought to counter reductive 'misrepresentations' of Muslim women in the media by drawing attention to their engagement in a wide variety of activities and fields. Above I have included images from her exhibition of a teacher of Japanese and a kickboxer (see Figure 8.1 and 8.2), which powerfully state that they are more than 'just' Muslim women. These images reinforce that their Muslimness does not prevent them from doing other things, and that their faith "fits" with a diversity of fields within their wider British context. The *Women Like Us* series by British Muslim TV (Khwaja, 2018) also champions this narrative, featuring interviews with Muslim women who are succeeding within a diverse array of fields. Again, their message is about empowering Muslim women, breaking down perceptions and barriers around what they can do, and showing how these women are achieving success within their fields whilst also being Muslim. The findings in my project are pertinent in this regard, reflecting in the main the experience of female Muslim teachers. My claim that RE teaching has offered some of these Muslim women authority to change these narratives by acting as Muslim role models to female Muslim pupils, particularly in the cases of Mrs Khan and Miss Meer, is a powerful statement of these emerging discourses. It could also represent a new, previously hidden sphere in which Muslim women are seizing leadership positions, which have been difficult in more formal Islamic educational institutions (Scott-Baumann & Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2015). Given the potential import of this claim, the capacity of female Muslim RE teachers to act as "religious leaders" warrants further investigation.

Thus, I argue that the notion of the 'RE teacher who is Muslim' is a significant statement of new narratives of Muslim identity which go beyond 'just Muslim' to 'Muslims who are'. This shift reflects the capacity of Muslims to contextually blend their faith with other social roles and frameworks. These kinds of narratives are only beginning to emerge within scholarship, and I believe the present study contributes to this emerging discourse by demonstrating the potential of, and identifying the ongoing need for, research which considers the 'everyday'. As Liebelt and Werbner (2018) suggest, the increasing attention to the 'everyday' in the study of Islam and Muslims has begun to elucidate these lived processes of identity construction and maintenance, emphasising the way in which Muslims can weave their faith into their social contexts. I would contend that research considering the 'everyday' remains a significant lacuna in the wider field of British Muslim studies.

Specifically, the preoccupation with Muslimness as the assumed primary identity-attribute seems to reflect this lacuna, in that scholarship continues to focus on religiously committed Muslims and typical sites of Islam - a contention that has been made previously (Fadil & Fernando, 2015; Marranci, 2010; Schielke, 2010). As scholars of 'lived religion' warn, scholarship has a tendency to

say more about "official" repertoires of religion rather than the actual experiences of individuals, given its privileging of "official" sites and committed religious actors (Ammerman 2016; McGuire 2008). Scholarship that has considered 'non-organised Muslims', 'everyday Islam', and Islam in the workplace, all disrupt this tendency by drawing attention to the creative space between Islam and the 'secular' that Muslims inhabit in their 'everyday' contexts (Dessing, Jeldtoft, & Woodhead, 2016a; Essers & Benschop, 2009; Liebelt & Werbner, 2018). As this study and the previous literature has highlighted, the workplace is an especially powerful site for this kind of identity work.

### 8.0.2 Neutrality and Notions of RE Teacher Professionalism

The participants' narratives also provide an interesting perspective on notions of RE teacher professionalism. The participants seemed to value the non-confessional nature of RE teaching both pedagogically and academically, expressing commitments to teaching from a phenomenological world religions approach, criticality, breaking stereotypes, and fostering a sense of community cohesion. These values represent a broad array of teaching styles and so there is little evidence of any specific pedagogy that informed their work. As Freathy et al. (2017) note, this suggests that they acted as 'pedagogical bricoleurs', utilising approaches as they saw fit according to the needs of their pupils and the topic. As such, the participants' agency as RE teachers reflected these wider commitments to non-confessional, phenomenological RE.

I would nuance this by suggesting that their commitments and pedagogy also reflected their Muslim identity-attribute. There is evidence that the emphasis on RE as a force for social cohesion was influenced by the participants' desire to break stereotypes about Muslims. Their 'hypervisibility', sensitivities, and potential positioning within the topic under discussion also shaped their pedagogical decisions. Through the discussion of homosexuality, it was revealed that some of the participants did adapt their approach to some topics given these factors, wary that the discussions could place them in compromising situations. A link between personal faith and pedagogy has only been touched upon in the literature. This could be a symptom of the lack of empirical work underpinning pedagogical debates (Bakker & Heimbrock, 2007). The potential for pedagogy to be shaped by faith, in terms of the social milieu of the classroom, is worth further exploration. This has implications for the training and assessment of RE teachers, particularly with regard to a growing trend toward more dialogical approaches (Everington 2016). Still, it must be stated that, in the main, the participants advocated the use of a diverse array of pedagogies, and, during my fieldwork, demonstrated this in their practice.

At the centre of the participants' concept of the RE teacher was the notion of neutrality. Neutrality framed the above commitments, and was the primary professional ideal that their teaching identity was orientated around. The boundary-work between their personal and professional attributes was

prompted by their understanding that, as non-confessional RE teachers, they should be neutral in the classroom. Thus, their experiences as Muslims were shaped by this notion of RE teacher professionalism.

This is important to state given the increasing scholarly criticism surrounding the neutral professional discourse. Despite these sustained critiques of neutrality as an 'impossible aim' (Franken and Loobuyck 2017), the 'neutral RE teacher' still seems to be the archetype to which RE teachers orient themselves. The pervasiveness of this discourse is evident in the similarity of the participants' experience to my own, and to other accounts in the literature. This suggests that neutrality is something that RE teachers generally aim toward regardless of faith commitment, and despite these critiques. The success of these scholarly critiques in impacting the professional discourse of neutrality is therefore questionable. I imagine that much of this continuity has to do with preconceived notions that are passed on from teacher mentors during ITT to new RE teachers as opposed to being a fault with ITT itself.

However, my findings suggest there are several potential complications with the attempt to undermine the value of neutrality as a professional discourse within in RE. In terms of the participants' understanding of their role as non-confessional RE teachers, the notion of neutrality was an important way in which the participants made the distinction between their Muslim and RE teacher attributes. This gave them a sense of authority as RE teachers, where their academic expertise about religions came mainly from Western academic settings and much of their skill came from developing ways of being neutral in the classroom. Neutrality was also necessary to facilitate the inclusion of their faith, in their use of code-switching and PLK, allowing them to enrich curriculum representations with their own perspective without this perspective becoming normative or representative of the "mainstream" Islamic tradition. Also, one of the most enticing aspects of the role for many of the participants, this was a chance to have discussions outside more traditional religious spaces where discussing certain topics may not be possible. This aspect of RE was also seen as important for the teaching of pupils, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to disrupt their preconceived notions. Eroding this boundary could potentially disrupt the way in which religiously committed RE teachers make the distinction between when they are speaking from their faith position and when they are speaking from other positions. In doing so, this could disrupt precisely why these participants saw themselves as distinct from the "religious leader" in their capacity to explore aspects of religion from a non-confessional position. I would therefore urge caution around disrupting the neutral discourse from a purely philosophical vantage point. Whilst it may be imperfect, the notion of neutrality itself facilitated the participants' embodiment of non-confessional RE by prompting the boundary-work between the personal and professional, which was

integral in allowing them to occupy various ontological and epistemological positions within their teaching.

Moreover, neutrality was also important to their faith identity. Neutrality seemed to offer the participants an important safe space to retreat into to maintain the integrity of their faith. The invocation of the professional boundary gave the participants some control over discussions, which inevitably turned to their faith identity given their visibility. In these instances, they could head off potentially uncomfortable discussions by establishing that their thoughts were not under scrutiny, reflecting their position as neutral. Given the current securitised context of education, and the imposition of *Prevent* and FBVs into RE, this kind of control is also vital to protecting their professional positions in school. This use of neutrality was replete in their practice, using code-switching to 'mask' their religious identity in certain instances, and was understood by the participants as a necessary skill.

The neutral space also became a place where they could position themselves to speak in the hypothetical, facilitating their capacity to countenance other positions without compromising their faith. Again, the notion of "teaching not preaching" encapsulates this, stating that they were not implicating their faith in these discussions. As discussed in Chapter 5, this was also an important legitimising motif for the participants to assure themselves, and others, that they were not compromising their faith. Thus, neutrality provided them another position from which to speak from, and to "be" within their teaching, distinct from their Muslim position. Again, the potential of a neutral footing to be of benefit to religiously committed RE teachers has been overlooked in favour of contentions around its 'secular shape' (Bryan & Revell, 2011; Cooling, 2002; Copley, 2005). Whilst there is evidence that neutrality affected the embodiment of the participants' Muslimness, and caused potential anxieties with notions of RE professionalism, in practice the experience of this did not seem to be as problematic as the literature suggests. The participants in my study recognised the potentially liberating space that neutrality offered, and used it to great effect.

It did seem that the participants' understanding of neutrality evolved over the course of their careers. Whilst newer teachers maintained that they could be 'objectively' neutral, as they gained experience they seemed to have shifted toward 'impartiality', incorporating their faith as a teaching resource. This, in part, came from a pragmatic awareness of the impact of their faith, both in terms of visibility and a desire to maintain their own religious commitments. Thus, the realisation that neutrality was an 'impossible aim' seemed to have naturally occurred to them through their practice. An interesting facet of this temporal development is that these critiques of neutrality are something that is vital to RE teachers' own professional development, simply reflecting their life-

course as teachers growing into their practice. I believe that this temporal aspect draws attention to a shortcoming in current ITT that seems to forego discussions of the potential impact of trainees' faith. This is particularly pertinent for 'Muslim RE teachers' who may be more visibly religious on the classroom stage. The narratives of the participants' practice captured in my project could be a valuable resource for these discussions within ITT programmes.

Still, neutrality did bring consistent concerns surrounding "bias" and "indoctrination" as something that should be avoided, reinforcing assumptions that religion could be presented 'value-free'. It could be argued that this reflects the imposition of *Prevent* and FBVs into the professional framework of the RE teacher. The surprising lack of contestation and 'narratives of continuity' surrounding *Prevent* could be evidence of an overlap with the kinds of values within the discourse of neutrality and the non-confessional aims of RE, particularly in conjunction with the participants' emphasis on breaking stereotypes and social cohesion, as suggested by some scholars (Gearon, 2013; Miller, 2011). However, FBVs seemed to be more readily criticised as complicating their role, supporting Farrell (2016) and Lander's (2016) critiques of FBVs. Although I maintain that the participants' concerns with "indoctrination" and "bias" came from their own agency as educators, the sense that *Prevent* may have exacerbated these concerns cannot be dismissed, especially given the 'policy grey area' surrounding the inclusion of one's faith (Everington, 2014). These concerns became reified in moments of tension between their faith and their professional role, such as in their teaching of homosexuality. I intend to explore the participants' identity work and experiences through the lens of the *Prevent* assemblage in a later paper, as in-depth engagement has been left out of the present discussion. For the moment, I would argue that *Prevent*, and to a lesser extent FBVs, were not experienced as a direct challenge to their Muslim identity, but, as Lockley-Scott (2017) has noted, as a 'perpetual anxiety'.

Overall however, there seems to be considerable synergy between the participants' values as Muslims and as RE teachers. The participants' highlight how they saw their work as morally "good", and that teaching enabled the expression of themselves as Muslims in terms of their character and ethos. Panjwani (2016) has similarly noted the potential for an 'overlapping consensus' between Muslim and non-Muslim values in education. Yet, once again, such synergies have rarely been highlighted in scholarship, particularly in relation to FBVs (see Panjwani, 2016, p. 332). I believe that drawing specific attention to these synergies are important, as they counter the overwhelmingly antagonistic picture illustrated in the wider literature, that in many ways repeats a 'clash of civilisations' rhetoric. Wilkinson (2015) has also noted this tendency within the literature. Discussion of synergies and tactics again nuances the wider scholarship. It could also provide further for trainees, and attract more Muslims to the profession, to diversify the RE teaching body.

Moreover, there is consistent suggestion that non-confessional RE is of specific value to Muslims. Most of the participants in this study consistently stated that engaging in RE had strengthened their faith. They spoke of the confidence that being more knowledgeable about religions generally and actively considering criticisms fostered in their own understanding of their faith. There is some remarkable suggestion of a potential 'feedback effect' here on the participants' own understanding of their faith. Whilst the impact of RE on the worldviews of pupils is well documented, rarely has this been considered in terms of the teachers who are also present in these discussions. Some of the participants draw specific attention to the shortcomings of traditional Islamic education in this regard, in turn highlighting the importance of non-confessional RE to Muslim pupils and its focus on discussing, and appraising, the actual *meaning* of Islam and other faiths. As such, they also advocated its importance for Muslim pupils by allowing them to develop their faith for themselves from an informed position. Here they seem to be indicating a more resilient understanding of Islam that has come through critically engaging with RE (Miller, 2013).

These accounts problematise the perception that the 'secular', non-confessional nature of RE has been antagonistic toward Muslims (Ipgrave 1999; Revell 2012), and religiously committed pupils generally (Moulin, 2015). There is also some contention with a 'weak form of critical openness' that Ipgrave (1999) has championed with regard to the teaching of Muslim pupils within RE, which advocates approaching other religions from within Islam. Although some of the participants were wary of using critical RE in the style of Mr Ali, there is a sense in the data that part of coming to know one's faith involves discomfort, as part of "figuring it out for yourself". This was particularly important in some of the participants' work, who distinguish between what is "culture" and what is "religion". Mrs Khan and Miss Ahmed, both of whom identified as 'Muslim RE teachers', were heavily engaged in this kind of practice. A similar contention has been made by Sahin (2013) who has argued for a more critical Islamic education. As he (2013, p. 239) writes:

> Such practices fail to transform learners and communities to develop the courage
> and competence required to face the challenges of today… Without building a clear
> educational hermeneutics that helps us to think educationally about Islam, we will
> not be able to discern a transformative educational theology of Islam capable of
> guiding the modern practice of Islamic education.

Therefore, I tentatively suggest that these participants could be seen as forerunners of a new, critical Islamic engagement. This links back to the emerging narratives of British Muslim identity that are pushing what resources can appropriated with an Islamic repertoire of meaning-making.

### 8.0.3 Visibility, Racialisation, and Agency

A recurring tension in the participants' accounts were the intersections between being visibly Muslim, racialisation, and their subsequent framing by others. They were aware that by looking visibly Muslim their faith would be invoked in the classroom, and so would forcibly become part of the discussion. As such, there was a clear tension between the participants' notions of neutrality and their visibility as Muslims, which potentially compromised both.

I argue that their experiences of racialisation and its tensions with the professional discourse of neutrality reveal the 'whiteness' of the notion of the RE teacher. These experiences broadly support the discourse in the wider literature about a tension between 'blackness' and the 'whiteness' of teaching (Bariso, 2001; Benn et al., 2011; Bhopal, 2015). There were also some allusions to these processes being exacerbated by the *Prevent* assemblage (Farrell, 2016). The participants' references to the "atheist" or "Christian" RE teacher suggests that neutrality is the privilege of these groups, as the ontological norm of Britain more widely. By looking visibly different, their faith compromised these norms in this way. Observing ritual, notably abstaining from alcohol, also had this effect. This brought with it a pragmatic awareness that being truly neutral was 'impossible' given their obvious Muslimness. This prompted the development of strategies in which to manage their construction by others. Recognising the 'whiteness' of neutrality contributes to wider discussions surrounding the difficulties religiously committed RE teachers face, which is rarely commented upon. 'Muslim RE teachers' face a unique challenge in this regard, where their visible bodies intersect with the professional discourses of RE.

Furthermore, the female participants in the study seemed to be more vulnerable to these racialised constructions, given the 'hypervisibility' of their dress (Jeldtoft 2016). Within the accounts of the female teachers who wore the hijab, their decisions to wear the hijab to work were significant events in the construction of their teacher identities. These decisions were redolent of the choice between being a 'good Muslim' or a 'good teacher' (Benn et al., 2011), with the hijab being seen as an embodied compromise of their capacity to be neutral and non-confessional. Whilst this did not prevent or change the way the participants understood their role, it did change how they were constructed by others, and therefore did impact their practice through the subsequent managing of their faith within classroom discussion. There is also evidence of a negative impact in terms of their wider standing within their staff bodies, eliciting questions by other teachers about a perceived "change in personality". Although none of the participants suggested that this had impacted their career retention and progression, wearing the hijab did contribute to their sense of being 'other' within the wider teaching body. It could be suggested that this feeling of 'otherness' may have exacerbated tensions surrounding the incorporation of other aspects of their faith, such as observing

ritual, and inspired them to appear more neutral and "objective" to compensate for this. Although I would urge caution with such analyses as potentially reductive, Puwar's (2004) insights around 'ontological complicity' in the workplace could be a fruitful analytical lens in which to interrogate this potential compensation further.

However, with reference to my above caution surrounding critiques of neutrality, there is a need to reconsider how this discourse is experienced by minority faith actors. I believe that the notion of 'impartiality' as advocated by Jackson and Everington (2017) is a powerful way of incorporating these other, more visible bodies within the professional discourse of RE. The move to 'impartiality' seemed to be the natural evolution of the participants' pedagogy within the classroom, predicated on the awareness that their faith would be brought into the classroom through their bodies. To support this, the policy 'grey areas' of including one's own position could be clarified further, as Everington (2014) also advocates. To this end, the narratives, strategies, and examples captured in this data could be used to produce guidance for both policy makers and ITT to better establish good practice surrounding 'impartiality'. With reference to this practice, much of the participants' identity work involved developing strategies to control their framing and footing by others in and outside the classroom. The development of code-switching was integral to this, linguistically stating their positioning within a given moment to their pupils. In turn, they were signalling their ontological commitments behind a statement in that given moment.

What was particularly striking about racialisation was how it denied both their agency as Muslims and as RE teachers. This builds upon the extension of their agency in terms of their identity construction by recognising how reduction to their Muslimness denied the participants the capacity to occupy different roles. Unlike the white atheist or Christian RE teacher, who were seen to choose to draw upon these identities freely, these participants had to work to achieve this freedom. This included resisting others' perception that they were always speaking from a Muslim position. This potential development of racialisation goes beyond the reduction to, and subsequent discrimination against, the Muslim identity-attribute solely, to the reduction to the Muslim identity-attribute itself. In doing so, it highlights that agency - the capacity to choose who to be and whether to represent an individual or group identity - is a privilege of non-racialised groups.

In addition, processes of racialisation potentially extend to their construction by other Muslims. A significant finding within this study is the extent to which the participants struggled with the conflation of their Muslim and RE teacher identity-attributes by Muslim pupils, and the subsequent religious expectations placed upon them. Whilst this has been touched upon by Everington (2014), the presence of intra-Muslim racialisation has yet to be articulated within scholarship. This is

important to recognise because this conflation by Muslim pupils prompted considerable emotional discomfort with regards to their own understanding of their faith. The questions of other Muslims were perceived as accusations and critiques against their own expressions of Muslimness, intersecting with their performance as RE teachers. In this way, the assumptions of Muslimness that Muslim pupils brought denied the participants not only their agency to be Muslim in their own way, but also put pressure on what they could say in the classroom. Interestingly, Coll (2009) has also noted similar tensions in the case of Catholic teachers, who feared that they may not know enough about their own faith to support Catholic pupils.

This understanding of racialisation potentially offers a new concept in which to explore intra- and inter-group relations between Muslims. Within the study it was interesting to note the wider experiences of the Shia and Ahmadi participants in relation to these assumptions, who had experienced 'othering' by both the curriculum and their local Muslim communities. These external Muslim politics came into the classroom to affect their experience, shaping how they understood themselves as role models and sometimes complicated their relationships with other Muslims within their school contexts. Furthermore, because of feelings of a shared faith inspired by the *Ummah*, negotiating these conflicts tended to be more problematic than instances of racialisation and racism by non-Muslims, which could be dismissed as "ignorant comments". It could be argued that 'racialisation' is the wrong term for this kind of phenomena as it misapprehends the power behind these processes, understood in the context of the hegemony of 'whiteness' (Meer and Modood 2009). Still, the concept gets at the imbalances of power within Muslim communities surrounding norms of Muslimness, and how this power is enacted within everyday social situations to facilitate or deny its various forms.

## 8.1 How Did This Identity Construction Occur in Practice?

The participants' practice further draws attention to their agency as Muslims and as RE teachers and reflects the boundary work between these attributes that was the core of their teacher identities. Through their practice they achieved this by constantly manipulating the frames and footings within which they were positioned. Their pedagogy was replete with these instantaneous and fluid shifts between their Muslim and RE teacher selves, signalling moment by moment which values and commitments they were bringing to a given statement. Consideration of their positioning as role models, observing ritual, and living 'vicariously' through Muslim pupils, reveals spaces in which they could be explicitly Muslim within their school contexts.

The discussion of practice led me to argue for a more bricologic notion of Muslim identity, which is again of significance to all of the fields within which this study is situated. Sociological scholarship of British Muslim identity has been hesitant to apply the bricologic notion of identity to Muslims, highlighting the limitations and continued centrality of certain cores of Islam. The pervasiveness of this picture of Muslimness within accounts of Muslims in education is one example of this. Whilst such limitations were present, their practice reveals the fluidity and creativity that the participants, as Muslims, employed to construct their teacher identities. By playing with the codes of both Muslimness and the RE teacher, they were able to weave their faith into the 'everyday' practices of their non-confessional teaching. In line with Jeldtoft's (2011) work and 'everyday lived Islam' (Dessing et al. 2016), this seemed to involve a 'pragmatic reconfiguration' of practice to "fit" it within their working lives as RE teachers. However, the data also suggests that there was a more fundamental reconfiguration of the participants' understanding of Muslimness in terms of their role as RE teachers, pushing this claim further. This kind of reconfiguration is captured in Essers and Benschop's (2009) work, whose participants created new expressions of being Muslim women in the boundary between their faith and their entrepreneurial roles. With reference to the previous discussion of new narratives of British Muslim identity, my study's exploration of practice has revealed new expressions of 'Muslimness'.

A possible future development of bricolage discussed here is Moosa's (2005, Chapter 8) recovery bricolage and *poiesis*[24] from within classical Islamic thought, in the works of Al-Ghazālī. Moosa (2005, p. 38) considers how Ghazālī reformulated and reconstructed the materials and narratives of his predecessors into a 'coherent but profoundly refigured whole', marking new ways of "being Muslim". This also marked an intellectual break with these older narratives, much to the dismay of other scholars (Moosa 2005, p. 39). As such, this work tentatively suggests that the notion of bricolagic constructions of Muslim identity are perhaps closer to what is "Islamic" than previously assumed, and, intuitively, I believe parallels can be drawn between the experience of Ghazālī and the participants in this study, who are contending with established discourses from non-Muslim and Muslims.

These new manifestations incorporate a much more subtle and implicit repertoire than the visible and physical signs of Muslimness that are typically considered in the literature. Examples in this thesis include infusing their 'secular' work with an Islamic ethos, being Muslim in terms of their

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[24] "'Poiesis,'' or s*hi'rīya* in Arabic, is the making or construction of something by means of poetics, which involves imitation or representation, also called mimesis… As a form of action, it is a doing. But the making of a representation involves something more: standing back from one's actions and engaging in reflection requires one to actively consider how knowledge is made instead of viewing knowledge passively' (Moosa 2005, p. 38).

character, and also seeing their 'secular' work as an act of faith itself. As such, my thesis contributes to a wider understanding of Muslim identity by drawing attention to this more implicit repertoire, and in turn disrupts the tendency to privilege "official" indicators of Muslimness. As I have noted, the analytical approaches of lived religion and everyday Islam are important in this endeavour, with their focus on how the spiritual is attended to in the 'everyday' (McGuire 2008), and their capacity to see faith from other contextual vantage points (Ammerman 2014). Thus, I restate the theoretical and methodological importance of this scholarship within ongoing debates surrounding British Muslim identity.

## 8.2 Were there any Tensions Between these Attributes?

Despite this creativity and fluidity, there were tensions between the participants' Muslim and RE teacher identity-attributes. These tensions revealed sites of incoherence between these attributes. Tensions tended to centre on the participants' "conservative" or "traditional" beliefs and the "liberal" values that they felt they had to espouse as RE teachers. Homosexuality was shown to be a significant fault line between their personal beliefs and professional commitments, supporting wider research (Halstead & Lewicka, 1998; Merry, 2005; Sanjakdar, 2013; Scott-Baumann, 2003). This has also been noted in wider scholarship as a symbolic boundary between Muslims and wider British sensibilities, although a recent survey suggests that young Muslims may be changing this narrative (Ipsos Mori 2018). However, it is likely that teachers from other faiths also experience such tensions. Further research is needed to explore how these tensions are experienced more widely.

Understanding how these tensions limit the construction of bricolage offers an important nuance to the above discussion of the participants' identity work. The participants were concerned with maintaining coherence in their bricolage, and so their feelings of compromise can be understood as expressions of when this coherence was challenged. Coherence offers a way in which to incorporate the 'cores' of Islam established in literature surrounding British Muslim studies, by highlighting how their faith repertoire limits the positions and expressions that these actors can adopt within their contexts. Specifically, Altglas's (2014a) notions of pre-constraints of meaning, sociocultural logics, and power-relations reveal how some configurations of bricolage are prevented. The topic of homosexuality elicited the intersection between these various limiting factors, which was shown to problematise their capacity to teach the topic, and affected their teaching style. As such, Altglas's (2014a, 2014b) work surrounding coherence is an important addition to the notion of bricologic Muslim identity forwarded in this thesis.

A significant contribution of this discussion is the presentation of an eschatological dimension to the experience of these 'Muslim RE teachers', which recognises their perception of their work within the purview of the divine. This has been lacking in wider accounts. Although this is present within Mogra's (2009) analysis, his reduction to theology obscures the messiness of this tension and the potential for such conflict. Thus, his claim that the participants were able to put themselves as teachers first yet still define their role Islamically seems somewhat simplistic. From the perspective of agency advanced in this thesis, the eschatological dimension presents an iterative account of agency in which their Muslim attribute is orientated toward a transcendental authority, whilst their RE teacher attributes is orientated toward this-worldly authority. These tensions reveal moments of perceived conflict between this-worldly and transcendent authority. The inclusion of the transcendent in this way has powerful implications for the notion of teacher agency, recognising that, in the case of religiously committed teachers, the iterative and projective dimensions of agency extend beyond this-worldly concerns. Some participants were concerned with how their practice would be judged on judgement day, alongside their concerns that they were utilising good pedagogy. I propose that Martin's (1997) notion of the 'angle of eschatological tension' - that there is a scale of difficulty that certain actions present to the coherence of an actor's religious narrative - could be helpful to unpick this further. I wish to pursue this concept in subsequent research, as I think it has the potential to capture many of these tensions and conflicts that research has suggested Muslims experience in the British public sphere beyond the lexicon of 'race' scholarship.

Finally, the presence of these tensions, especially around the highly sensitive topic of homosexuality, is suggestive of a 'liberal anxiety' toward "conservative" or "traditional" beliefs within educational policy (Holmwood 2017), and within the discourses of RE professionalism itself. As Barnes (2006) notes, prevailing understandings of phenomenological RE, with its emphasis on knowing the facts and implicit commitment to fostering social cohesion, are seemingly unable to seriously countenance 'illiberal' religious beliefs. Holmwood (2017) writes how Trojan Horse has enabled these anxieties to become enshrined in policy through *Prevent* and FBVs, securitising supposed 'illiberal cultural norms' through their association with terrorism and extremism. Together, this does suggest that the participants had to find ways of resisting these dominant professional discourses through their use of tactics, to maintain the integrity of their faith. It could be argued that this problematises the major claims in this thesis, suggesting that their identity work was not willingly engaged in or reflective of their agency. However, based on the facts that the participants referred to these tensions openly and as a small part of their experience, and discussed with the development of tactics to outmanoeuvre these pressures, I do not believe that this is the case. Rather these factors illuminate the limitations of the expression of their faith that their professional

frameworks placed upon them. Whilst these 'liberal anxieties' have been commented on within RE and educational policy (Barnes, 2006; Gearon, 2013; Moulin, 2012), their impact on notions of RE professionalism are important to consider, specifically in terms of the growing push toward more dialogic and impartial notions of neutrality that encourage RE teachers to include their beliefs in the classroom. There is the potential that this pedagogical shift could place certain RE teachers in extremely compromising situations. Thus, despite the participants' freedom to act as pedagogical bricoleurs generally (Freathy et al. 2017), these "traditional" beliefs did seem to intersect with this capacity by limiting certain pedagogies in specific discussions and topics.

# Chapter 9: Conclusion

The present thesis attends to a significant lacuna within the established discourse surrounding Muslims in British state education. Whilst prior research has documented the experiences of Muslim pupils and parents, the experiences of Muslim teachers is an emerging yet under-researched field (Shah & Shaikh, 2010). These studies have primarily explored the experiences of Muslims through the lens of 'race' rather than religion, drawing attention to systemic processes of racialisation and racism which construct Muslims as a 'problem that needs to be managed' (Miah, 2017). This work has been particularly concerned with the increasing imposition of the *Prevent* policy assemblage, which has securitised Muslim identities and denied Muslims the capacity to incorporate Muslimness within their school contexts (Lockley-Scott, 2017; Miah, 2016; Shah, 2018; Sian, 2015). Research has similarly highlighted such challenges for Muslim teachers, with racism presenting various boundaries to their career retention and progression and affecting their capacity to incorporate their 'Muslimness' into their role (Mogra, 2013; Shah, 2016; Shah & Shaikh, 2010). However, there has been concern that this racialised focus misses the spiritual dimension of Muslim teachers' working lives (Mogra 2013). Mogra's (2009, 2010, 2013, 2014) work has pioneered the shift toward 'spiritual' understandings of Muslim teacher identity, indicating the capacity for Islam to be incorporated within the role. Everington's (2014, 2015) work has also begun to demonstrate how the experience of minority faith RE teachers is shaped by both their understanding of their faith and their professional role, further developing this discourse to more explicitly incorporate the actual practice of the teacher. Yet these various analytical vantage points have, until now, not been brought together.

My thesis offers a significant and original contribution to scholarly understanding of Muslim teachers through its exploration of the identities and practices of 'Muslim RE teachers', addressing the current paucity of literature surrounding these actors. Through data collected with 21 participants via interviews and shadowing, the findings illuminate how the participants understood, constructed, and managed their identity-attributes as Muslims and as RE teachers within their 'secular' school contexts, how they achieved this in their teaching practice, and the potential tensions and limitations in this construction. The present study is the largest qualitative research project on 'Muslim RE teachers' to date, and is amongst the largest conducted with both Muslim teachers and RE teachers generally. The thesis therefore makes an original and significant contribution to the understanding of Muslim teachers by presenting a more substantial and sophisticated account of their experiences and identity work than previous studies, and acts as a corrective to some of the scholarly tendencies that underpin these portrayals. Similarly, the thesis contributes to

understanding of the contemporary experiences of RE teachers and the professional discourses within which they are situated. I conclude by restating the main findings of the research in terms of its contribution to this wider scholarship.

## 9.0 Muslim Teachers

The findings within this thesis contribute directly to the emerging discourse surrounding Muslim teachers. Exploring the identity work of these 'Muslim RE teachers' has produced deeper understanding of how these actors construct and experience themselves as Muslims and as RE teachers within English secondary schools, adding to this previous research. The study has proposed an innovative new perspective toward understanding these actors by focussing on their underlying agency and their capacity to achieve their goals both as Muslims and as educators. This analysis draws upon existing scholarship of narrative teacher identity, with emphasis on the ecological model of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015). In doing so, the analysis has attempted to bridge a conceptual gap within the field by synthesising approaches of 'race', religion, and teacher research within the theoretical framework, situated in a broader focus on lived religion and everyday lived Islam. The research makes an important theoretical and methodological contribution in this regard by drawing attention to the role of agency in the construction of Muslim teacher identities.

The study has also highlighted the capacity for Muslim teachers to position their faith backstage in their school contexts, and provides empirical evidence for how this identity work was achieved in practice. The findings in Chapter 5 challenge the current concept of the 'Muslim teacher' expressed in the literature, which is preoccupied with visible and "official" expressions of Muslimness, and its continued assumption of the primacy of the Muslim identity-attribute, through the notion of the 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim'. This reflects the repositioning of the Muslim identity-attribute backstage in order to occupy positions as neutral, non-confessional RE teachers. What is important to emphasise is that this positioning allowed the participants to achieve their agency as educators in this way, embodying their educational values and commitments with regards to non-confessional RE.

In doing so, these findings challenge the prevailing conceptualisations of Muslims in education as 'Muslim first', providing further evidence of the limits of such identification, pointed to by Panjwani and Moulin-Stożek (2017). The contestations of the participants explored in chapter 5 reveal an active resistance to the 'racialisation' and 'religification' that amounts to an over-determination of their Muslim identity. As such, the study offers a corrective to these scholarly tendencies by advocating closer attention to the roles and desires of these actors as educators as well as Muslims

in my analysis. To paraphrase Panjwani (2017), the study provides empirical evidence that 'no Muslim is just a Muslim', a reminder that these actors are also teachers within their school contexts, and demonstrates the extent to which they can incorporate their faith within these 'secular' educational frameworks. The data also supports other studies which have drawn attention to the ways in which Islam has been incorporated within non-Islamic policy frameworks and repertoires, as in the case of Muslim chaplains (Gilliat-Ray et al. 2013) and Muslim businesswomen (Essers and Benschop 2009).

However, the presence of a small number of self-identifying 'Muslim RE teachers' in the analysis cautions against the overstatement of this claim. The participants were clearly still Muslims in their role. The study provides new insights into the processes of racialisation in this regard, in the intersection of the Muslim body with notions of RE teacher professionalism. The study broadly supports the claims in wider research around the experiences of racism, but develops this discussion by stressing its impact in the denial of their agency by reducing them to their Muslim position. The findings therefore offer a contribution to this wider 'race' perspective by exposing how racialisation and racism not only problematised the participants' incorporation of Muslimness in their role, but also problematised their capacity to construct themselves as who they wanted to be. This is an important development of the notion of 'identity stasis' as argued by Benn (1998, 2003), building upon the established tension between the 'good Muslim' and 'good teacher' body (Benn et al., 2011). The findings also suggest that Muslim women are particularly vulnerable to these processes of racialisation in relation to aspects of dress, specifically the hijab. Again, this broadly supports wider scholarship that has drawn attention to the increased intensity of racism toward Muslim women (Haddad, 2007).

Finally, the discussion of tensions revealed the perception of transcendental authority within the classroom, which could be experienced in tension with the this-worldly authority of their educational duties and frameworks. Whilst the literature has made allusions to a compromise of their religious identities in the role of the teacher, this has frustratingly only been glimpsed at due to the inability of the 'race' approach to articulate these kinds of tensions. The analysis in Chapter 7 provides a way of articulating these tensions by attending to the potential eschatological implications of their work. Furthermore, this has potentially revealed a fascinating extension of the projective dimension of teacher agency with regard to religiously committed teachers, who see the impact of their work also in terms of divine judgement and the afterlife. This understanding has potential implications for the sociology of religion more widely, as to better contextualise the experiences of religious actors even in the 'secular' workplace as contexts within the purview of the divine.

## 9.1 British Muslim Studies

The findings in this study are also of relevance to wider debates surrounding British Muslim identities, particularly in relation to scholarly representations and assumptions of 'Muslimness' within these accounts. The narratives presented here seem to touch upon a wider developing narrative of British Muslim identity that is shifting from 'just Muslim' to 'Muslim who is'. The fluidity and creativity with which the participants approached their practice demonstrated their capacity to play with established and "official" repertoires. This bricologic sense of Muslim identity has been increasingly highlighted with the turn to everyday lived Islam, emphasising the way in which Muslims "fit" their faith with their everyday contexts (Dessing et al., 2016b). As Jeldtoft (2011) notes, these narratives disrupt "official" repertoires and scholarly understanding of Islam and Muslim identities, by contextualising expressions of Islam in the 'everyday'. The narratives in this study provide further evidence of this kind of identity work within the British public sphere.

Moreover, the exploration of practice in Chapter 6 contributes toward a new understanding of Muslimness, and Muslim practice, that is more subtle and implicit. The participants' positioning of their Muslim identity backstage brought with it expressions in terms of character and ethos rather than explicit signifiers of Muslim identity. In the case of Mr Ali, who saw teaching as an extension of faith, this blurred the commonly-held boundaries between the 'secular' and religious. Similarly, role modelling, and other roles occupied alongside classroom teaching, allowed the participants to be explicitly Muslim within their school contexts, living 'vicariously' through Muslim pupils by supporting them religiously (see Davie, 2013). These findings add to an emerging conceptual repertoire of Muslimness, articulated by scholars of everyday lived Islam, by illustrating these other, more implicit and contextually constructed, expressions. Specifically, the findings broadly support Cadge and Konieczny (2014) claim that religious individuals use their faith as an ethoi to interpret their work in order to construct coherent identities within the workplace.

The notion of coherence also offers new insight into the identity work of Muslims more widely. The revindication of coherence within the concept of bricolage advocated by Altglas (2014a, 2014b) provides a way of conceptually bridging competing perspectives in scholarship. Some scholars have highlighted the fluidity and creativity that Muslims engage in to construct their identities (Dessing et al., 2016b; Jeldtoft, 2011; Werbner, 2018), while others have stressed their orientation around certain Islamic cores and orthodoxies (DeHanas, 2015; Jacobson, 1998; McLoughlin, 2007; Shah, 2016, 2018). The findings presented in this thesis show both to be necessary perspectives in the case of 'Muslim RE teachers'. As discussed in Chapter 7, there were clearly limits to the positions that the

participants could occupy from a faith perspective, but they demonstrated a continued creative capacity to tactically engage with these positions and develop new narratives. This kind of thinking resembles in some ways the intellectual engagement of traditionally trained Muslim chaplains, who have developed practices of pastoral care from both the Islamic tradition and within the policy frameworks of their 'secular' institutions (Gilliat-Ray et. al., 2013).

## 9.2 RE Teaching

This research has also provided new perspectives on notions of RE professionalism, which can be used to support the training and on-going development of Muslim RE teachers and religiously committed RE teachers of other faiths, as well as the engagement of Muslim pupils with RE. The participants' narratives establish the discourse of the 'neutral RE teacher' as an important professional value to which they are subscribed. The identification of the ongoing centrality of neutrality suggests that wider scholarly critiques of this notion of professionalism as an 'impossible aim' are not felt on the ground by teachers themselves. As a consequence, it could be argued that this reflects a wider problem of the ability of this scholarship to impact RE teaching practice, a question that has been recently raised by the RE teacher Dawn Cox (2018) in conversation with RE academics. However, as I have argued above, this could reflect resistance on the part of ITT providers and teachers themselves toward changing this discourse.

Furthermore, the data suggests that there has perhaps been an overstatement of problems with neutrality, and the assumption that a 'secular' form is necessarily inimical to the identities of religiously committed teachers (Bryan & Revell, 2011; Cooling, 2002; Copley, 2005). For the participants in this study their positioning as non-confessional, neutral teachers of religion provided them a sense of authority and legitimacy as experts within their field, particularly in relation to other "religious leaders". Undermining neutrality could therefore unintentionally undermine the authority of RE teachers as expert pedagogues, which is pertinent given the increasing marginalisation of RE within the curriculum and subsequent calls for reform. At times, neutrality also seemed to provide an important safe space that the participants could retreat into. It is worth considering my participants' desire to engage in non-confessional RE, and their expression of the benefits of non-confessional RE to both non-Muslim and Muslim pupils. Given the common perception of the participants in this study that non-confessional RE strengthened their faith, and that of Muslim pupils, I would tentatively reconsider the need for a 'weak form of critical openness' for the teaching of Muslim pupils as advocated by Ipgrave (1999) and Everington (2014).

The temporal aspect of the participants' teacher identities should also be emphasised. The understanding of the participants' own identity, and aspects of their practice, seemed to mature

with experience. Their increasing sense of efficacy gave them the confidence to explore pedagogical styles and find ways of incorporating their faith into their practice. The use of PLK is a significant contribution in this regard, expanding on Everington's (2014, 2015) work to establish its use as a pedagogical tool to incorporate one's own faith within the classroom as a resource. With reference to Jackson and Everington's (2017) calls for a move to impartiality, and Fancourt's (2007) discussion of the benefits of the 'dialogical' RE teacher, the teaching of PLK could therefore be an important pedagogical tool in achieving these changes. This has implications for ITT programmes and CPD as a valid pedagogy. Its use could also help clarify the 'policy grey areas' that complicate the incorporation of one's own faith within the RE classroom (Everington, 2014). The tendency of RE teacher research to be conducted with RE ITTs, likely due to ease of access, is also worthy of further scrutiny given these findings.

The present analysis has also offered a new perspective on notions of RE professionalism in terms of its intersection with visibility and 'race'. The 'hypervisibility' of Muslim actors complicates their capacity to achieve the professional norm of neutrality by eliciting their faith within discussion. This reveals the whiteness of the concept of neutrality itself, and the perception that neutrality was easier to achieve by white atheist or Christian teachers who are considered the norm within RE (see Fancourt 2017). From this perspective, it is striking how little the bodies of RE teachers are considered in wider pedagogical and professional debates, reflecting a pressing need for more empirical research in RE. Moreover, I advocate that further empirical research be conducted that explores the experiences of BME and minority faith RE teachers in terms of these pedagogical and professional debates, building on the work of Everington (2012, 2014, 2015) and this study. To my mind, this represents the entirety of contemporary scholarship that has primarily engaged with non-white and non-Christian RE teachers.

Finally, perhaps the most important contribution in terms of RE teaching, and developing support for RE ITT and CPD, is the need to actually talk about the impact of one's own faith within the role. It is consistently striking how little the impact of one's own faith is discussed both within training and within the careers of RE teachers, evidenced within the discussion in this thesis and my own experience. The boundary between the professional and personal was at the heart of all the participants' construction of their RE teacher identities, and much of their sense of professional development involved this boundary-work, requiring sophisticated and creative strategies to construct and maintain this. The fact that these strategies that were so central to their identities as RE teachers were seemingly developed *ad hoc* and in isolation, is an incredible statement of the shortcomings of current CPD and ITT. Specifically, the ubiquitous use of the motif "I'm teaching not preaching" and the label 'RE teacher who happens to be Muslim' suggests that coming to this

understanding was fundamental for these participants to succeed in the role. Making Muslim ITTs and other teachers aware of these narratives, and the plethora of other strategies they employed in the classroom, could therefore provide significant support.


## 9.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present study is limited in several ways. The study's sole focus on 'Muslim RE teachers' has provided an in-depth qualitative exploration of a small group of actors within the wider auspices of British education. There is scope, then, for future research to build upon the claims made in this thesis by including a quantitative perspective on the experiences of Muslim teachers more widely. To date there has been no sustained quantitative study of Muslim teachers that looks across these various intersections, and such research would be invaluable in situating their experiences in terms of wider teacher scholarship. Given the lack of statistical data about the religious identification of teachers, I would also suggest that mapping the religious identities of teachers in Britain would be a fantastic resource from which to begin such scholarship.

There is also the pressing need to explore the experiences of BME and minority religious RE teachers. The findings in this study have drawn attention both to the whiteness of the professional discourses of RE and also scholarship itself. Where calls to improve the representation of teaching have been longstanding and increasingly made, RE does seem to be a subject which is potentially attractive to religiously committed minority faith individuals, particularly if they have studied religion. Yet, as this research has identified, there are unique challenges that minority religious and BME actors face in terms of neutrality. The perspectives in this study are limited to the experiences of Muslims, and so exploring the experiences of those of other faiths would be a vital contribution and could lead to improving the representation of RE teaching itself.

Lastly, I suggest that this research sets the need for a new research agenda that utilises the insights of lived religion and everyday lived Islam to explore the identity work of British Muslims in 'secular' workplaces. The workplace seems to be a site where Muslims are exploring and constructing new ways of expressing their faith, resulting in new narratives of British Muslim identity and subtle repertoires of Muslimness. The study strongly supports Panjwani's (2017) critique of the limits of the assumed primacy of the Muslim identity-attribute in the identities of Muslims in education. Research that attends to the 'everyday' further supports these claims. As Liebelt and Werbner (2018, p. 2) write, the 'everyday':

… needs to be investigated empirically on the background of the fact that there is no longer any simple 'doxa' or taken-for-granted assumptions… whether these be secular, Islamic or Christian norms and doctrine.

Such scholarship is needed to understand how these 'simple 'doxa'' can no longer be 'taken-for-granted assumptions', in the new narratives of Islam and Muslimness emerging in British contexts. The present research has provided a small but significant contribution to this, emphasising the capacity for Muslimness to be implicit and embedded within, as well as co-constructed with, 'secular' contexts and practices. Just as the participants in this study challenged my own conceptions of what it meant to be a 'Muslim RE teacher', it seems that accounts of their identities and practice could capture a fundamental shift in what it means to 'be Muslim' in contemporary British contexts.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview Schedule Proforma

Participant:

**<u>Islam and Muslims in British Schools</u>**

**<u>Doctoral Research Project</u>**

**<u>Interview Schedule: Teachers.</u>**

**<u>Equipment Checklist:</u>**

- Digital recorder and spare batteries
- Back-up digital recorder (mobile phone/tablet)
- Charger
- Camera
- Project Leaflet
- Teacher Information Sheet and 2 consent forms
- School Information Sheet and 2 consent forms
- Pupil Information Sheet and 2 consent forms
- Map, directions, & Mobile phone
- Business Cards
- Pens and notebook

**<u>Introduction</u>**

- MV to introduce themselves; PhD Student (Year), Cardiff University, Islam-UK Centre.
- Introduction to doctoral thesis project (4 main questions):
  - Personal – What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain?
  - Professional – What is it like to be a Muslim and an RE teacher?
  - Institutional – What is it like to work in education/state-school?
- Explanation of interview procedure:
  - Time: about 1 hour
  - Will be recorded and transcribed (with consent). Recording and transcript will be kept private –
    - Use University standard anonymization protocols
    - All identifiable information removed, including school
    - Pseudonym will be used
    - Data will be encrypted and kept on a password protected drive in University locker
  - Interviewee rights:
    - Right to withdraw from project at any time
    - Can request data be destroyed
    - Can request to view the transcript produced
    - Can request to see thesis write-up
    - Right to request recording equipment to be turned off during interview to discuss anything "off the record"
  - Check that information sheet has been read

   o Opportunity to ask any questions about the interview

**Pre-interview procedures**

- Sign consent form (if not done so already)
- Turn off mobile phone/s
- Complete one page biography data capture form – see front sheet.
- Test recording equipment (whilst data capture form is being completed)
- Check willingness to continue with the interview (get interviewee to hear their voice on recorder to put them at ease)

**Data Capture Form**

**Personal (1)/Institutional – Background, education/training, motivations (biographical questions = warm-up)**

1. Could we start by telling me what you were doing before you became an RE teacher?


2. What lead you to become an RE teacher? *Probes: motivations, events, people, places, ideas, ideals, influences*


3. Were there any previous educational/work experiences that particularly enabled you to pursue teaching/teaching RE as a career?


4. Were there any advantages or challenges in being a Muslim going through school? *Probes: ITT, racism, Islamophobia, family/cultural view of teaching, religion*


5. And how about University? *Probes: ITT, racism, Islamophobia, family/cultural view of teaching, religion*

**Personal (2) – being a Muslim**

6. Please, as best as you can, explain to me what it 'means' to be a Muslim? (conceptually) *Probe: spiritual, theological concepts, tawhid, in Britain*

7. Are there any spiritual or religious concepts that are particularly important to you? *Probe: Islamic, general, humanist*

8. In what ways do you think these understandings shape your daily life, thoughts, actions, relationships etc.? *Probe: spiritual, theological, social*

9. How do you understand *Tawhid*?

10. How do you understand the nature of the Qur'an? *Probe: relevance, meaning, interpretation*

11. What is your understanding of who Muhammad was? *Probe: character, teacher, prophet*

**Professional (1) – constructing the 'RE teacher'**

12. Please describe to me what it 'means' to be an RE teacher? *Probe: job description, vocation, organisation*

13. What do you draw upon to get this idea? *Probe: previous teacher (Fancourt), previous RE, personal motivations, teaching standards/statutory guidance, theology, cultural*

14. What do you regard as the specific skills, knowledge, or other qualities, that lie at the heart of being a good RE teacher?

15. Do you that there's any areas of the official requirements, for example the teaching standards etc. or Government policy, has an impact on the effectiveness on your teaching?  Is there a personal impact? *Probe: PREVENT, FBV, disregard workload*

16. Please tell me a story which reflects your best experiences as an RE teacher:

17. Please tell me a story which reflects your worst experience as an RE teacher:

**Professional (2) – the 'Muslim RE teacher'**

18. Did your faith have any bearing on your decision to become an RE teacher in a non-faith state-school?
    *Probe: religion, spirituality, social, economic, why not a faith school?*

19. Is there any particular relevance or resonance between being a Muslim and being an RE teacher?
    *Probe: spiritual/religiously satisfying, social, economic, specific concepts*

20. Is there anything about your role that you, or other Muslims, may find challenging or off-putting?

21. How do you feel that being an RE teacher has shaped you as an individual and as a Muslim? *Probe: has it shaped understanding of Islam, spiritual life*

22. In what ways does your personal faith shape your professional approach to teaching? *Probe: benefits, pedagogy, challenges, barriers, racism/Islamophobia*

23. Are there any Islamic spiritual or religious concepts that you bring into the classroom in your teaching practice? *Probe: Islamic, general, humanist, example: Tawhid*

24. Given that you have to teach about different religions in a non-confessional way, including Islam and other faiths, do you feel the need to justify your role from a religious perspective? If so, why and how? *Probe: theological concepts, spiritual concepts, humanistic concepts*

25. Similarly, are there any particular topics that you find challenging to teach from a religious perspective?  Such as homosexuality, or sexual ethics? (via previous participants)

26. Do you have any thoughts on PREVENT and promoting Fundamental British Values? *Prompt: good/bad, terrorism, security, was it brought up earlier*

27. Please finish this sentence, a Muslim RE teacher is…

**Institutional (2) – Muslim RE teachers and wider Muslim communities**

28. Being a teacher obviously makes significant demands on you as an individual, so do you get any personal/religious support for your work?

29. Do you see yourself as a 'role model' for pupils?  Why/Why not? *Probe: Muslim, Asian, any/all*

30. How well do you think your local Muslim community understands your work?  *Probe:  Do you have much interaction with them?  In what ways? As teacher/Muslim/leader? Role Model*

31. To what extent do you think your work as a Muslim RE teacher could impact on Islam and Muslims in Britain more widely?

32. Is there anything else that would like to add or discuss?

**Post-interview closure**

- Invite to contact again if anything else arises
- Interviewer to summarise the most important things that have come from the interview
- Thanks
- Ask to take a photo, ascertain permission for use (publications, presentations, private analysis)
- Ask if they have any relevant materials I could see (diary, team meeting notes, guidance, training, anything they have written about their work – Facebook)
- Ask if the interviewee would like to keep in touch with the project? (Circle)

  - Invite to conferences/events

  - Direct to website for regular updates

  - Participation in the *Muslims in Britain MOOC*

  - Participation in possible development of training/support

  - Further participation in this research project at later stages (i.e. shadowing/focus group)

  - A summary leaflet of main findings at the end of the project

**After interview procedure**

- Download audio file to PC and encrypt/password protect
- Back-up on drive and online
- Write quick field notes (next page)
- Proceed to Co-planning session
- Write and send letter of thanks to teacher and school

**Post-interview researcher reflection (complete on the day)**

Emerging thoughts/themes

Links (other data, research)

Follow-up questions

Design reflections (overall experience, procedural smoothness, issues, setting, questions)

**Post-interview researcher reflection (complete on the day)**

Further reflection (self, experience, setting, feelings, cooperative?, anything)

## Appendix 2: Sample Data

| | Name[25] | Age | Area | Gender | Denomination | Professional Life Phase[26] | Interview Type | School Type | Demographic: Pupil's religious make-up |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mrs Iqbal | 30 – 39 | North West | F | Sunni | 8-15 years, HoD | Telephone (Pilot) | Comp. LEA | Mixed |
| 2 | Miss Mazhar | 20 - 29 | Midlands | F | Sunni | 4-7 years, MPS | Telephone (Pilot) | Comp. Academy | Mixed |
| 3 | Miss Ahmed | 30 – 39 | North West | F | Sunni | 16+ Years, HoD (Left) | Face-to-Face, home | N/A | N/A (no longer teaching). |
| 4 | Mrs Ibrahim | 30 - 39 | North West | F | Sunni | 16+ years, SLT | Face-to-Face, school | Comp. Academy | Muslim majority |
| 5 | Mrs Waheed | 20 - 29 | South West | F | Sunni | 8-15 years, MPS | Face-to-face, meeting room | Comp. Christian - ethos Academy | Christian or non-religious majority |
| 6 | Mr Jones | 30 - 39 | South East | M | Sufi | 8-15 years, MPS | Face-to-Face, home | Grammar Academy | Christian or non-religious majority |
| 7 | Miss Sumar | 20 - 29 | South East | F | Sunni | 4-7 years, MPS | Face-to-face, school | Comp. Academy | Mixed |
| 8 | Mr Ali | 20 - 29 | South East | M | Shia | 4-7 years, HoD | Face-to-Face, school | Comp. Academy | Mixed |
| 9 | Mrs Medhi | 20 - 29 | Midlands | F | Sunni | 1-3 years, MPS | Skype | Comp. Academy | Mixed |
| 10 | Miss Loonat | 20 - 29 | North West | F | Political | 4-7 years, MPS | Face-to-Face, school | Comp. Christian - ethos Academy | Mixed |
| 11 | Miss Abbas | 20 - 29 | North West | F | Sufi | 4-7 years, MPS | Face-to-Face, school | Comp. Christian – ethos Academy | Mixed |
| 12 | Mrs Bashir | 20 - 29 | South East | F | Sunni | 4-7 years, MPS | Face-to-Face, school | Comp. Academy | Mixed |
| 13 | Mr Shah | 30 - 39 | Midlands | M | Ahmadi | 8-15 years, MPS | Face-to-face, mosque | All-girls Academy | Mixed |

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[25] All the data has been anonymised to protect confidentiality. See the Methodology for discussion of the anonymisation procedure.
[26] Organised according to Day et. al.'s (2006, Chapter 5) schema of 'professional life phases'.

| 14 | Mr Begum | 20 - 29 | Midlands | M | Cultural | 1-3 years, MPS | Telephone | Comp. Academy | Mixed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Miss Memon | 20 - 29 | Midlands | F | Sunni | 1-3 years, MPS | Telephone | Comp. Academy | Muslim majority |
| 16 | Mrs Khan | 30 - 39 | North West | F | Sunni | 8-15 years, HoD | Skype | Comp. Christian -ethos Academy | Muslim majority |
| 17 | Miss Meer | 20 - 29 | North West | F | Sunni | 4-7 years, MPS | Face-to-Face, school | Comp. LEA | Mixed |
| 18 | Mr Chowdhury | 30 - 39 | North West | M | Shia | 8-15 years, MPS (left) | Face-to-Face, meeting room | Comp. LEA | Christian or non-religious majority |
| 19 | Miss Aziz | 20 - 29 | South East | F | Sunni | 4-7 years, MPS | Face-to-Face, school | Comp. Academy | Mixed |
| 20 | Mr Kossar | 40 - 49 | South East | M | Sunni | 1-3 years, MPS (left) | Face-to-Face, coffee shop | N/A | N/A |
| 21 | Miss Mahmood | 30 - 39 | North West | F | Sunni | 4-7 years, MPS | Face-to-face, coffee shop | Comp. Academy | Mixed |

## Week 2 Thursday

**11:00 A level**

There was significant disruption to my travel, and so I met TEACHER at 11 in reception – missed no teaching as Thursday morning is PPA, in time for 6th form pupil.

I quickly checked with TEACHER about Eid – school has approved the time off – needed an extra day to travel back from Manchester too. Aware that most schools wouldn't – there is a need here – 5 MTs, but it still meant a lot to TEACHER.

> **Matthew Vince**
> Issue of representation – justified on pragmatic grounds – needs to be a need AND recognised.
>
> School seemed supportive of Muslim needs on these grounds.

TEACHER then headed off to get my signed consent forms!

The session was just the 6th former looking over her notes on Islam, and TEACHER took me with helping her glue and stick some posters to the ceiling. I noticed TEACHER took part in the Spirited Arts competition. TEACHER outlined all her SoWs to me – Covers Xtianity, Hinduism, Islam and Spirituality in Year 8 – "good set up for Year 9". We then discussed an exam question she was setting – "its better to believe in multiple gods rather than 1 God – discuss".

> **Matthew Vince**
> What's the value of this?

TEACHER highlighted that she enjoyed teaching Hinduism because it is so different. I mentioned about others seeing it as monotheistic – she disagreed, "you should take it as it is".

6th former was sat in silence.

> **Matthew Vince**
> Doing no actual teaching in front of me?

TEACHER commented that the fast was hard work this year – heat.

**12:40 Lunch**

We went down to the library for "Ramadan club". There was a group of pupils outside waiting – some Muslim, some not Muslim. TEACHER insisted that only the fasting pupils were allowed in, to the upset of some pupils. 1 pupil made a fat joke about one of the others fasting.

> **Matthew Vince**
> Politics of space – could easily spiral into a complaint?

The librarian came out and asked TEACHER – "oh is this Ramadan club today?" – "Yeah" – "how is it?" – ZS laughed.

A couple of pupils were let in who were "best friends" with fasting pupils.

# Appendix 4: NVivo Codes

| Name | Sources | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BIOGRAPHY | 0 | 0 | 20/10/2017 22:35 | MV | 21/10/2017 00:01 | MV |
| Cultural Background Community | 15 | 10 | 21/10/2017 00:00 | MV | 05/01/2018 10:12 | MV |
| Motivation | 41 | 18 | 20/10/2017 23:59 | MV | 22/12/2017 16:52 | MV |
| Prior Education | 103 | 20 | 20/10/2017 23:57 | MV | 20/10/2017 23:58 | MV |
| ITT | 38 | 15 | 20/10/2017 23:58 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:50 | MV |
| Job | 2 | 2 | 02/11/2017 13:03 | MV | 19/12/2017 16:53 | MV |
| School | 16 | 11 | 20/10/2017 23:58 | MV | 05/01/2018 10:12 | MV |
| University | 28 | 14 | 20/10/2017 23:58 | MV | 05/01/2018 10:12 | MV |
| Work experience | 19 | 12 | 08/11/2017 13:37 | MV | 22/12/2017 16:56 | MV |
| Teacher Experience | 11 | 7 | 20/10/2017 23:57 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:17 | MV |
| Leaving teaching | 10 | 7 | 08/11/2017 13:41 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:37 | MV |
| School Contexts | 57 | 15 | 02/11/2017 13:16 | MV | 05/01/2018 11:29 | MV |
| Started Teaching | 26 | 19 | 13/11/2017 11:17 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:17 | MV |
| TLR position achieved | 17 | 12 | 13/11/2017 11:19 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:56 | MV |
| Tradition | 11 | 6 | 08/11/2017 14:04 | MV | 18/12/2017 07:36 | MV |
| Ahmedi | 7 | 1 | 18/12/2017 04:36 | MV | 18/12/2017 22:16 | MV |
| Shia | 2 | 1 | 19/11/2017 11:27 | MV | 19/11/2017 11:28 | MV |
| Sufism | 6 | 1 | 20/11/2017 15:29 | MV | 20/11/2017 16:09 | MV |
| Sunni | 3 | 3 | 08/11/2017 14:04 | MV | 16/11/2017 15:32 | MV |
| FAITH | 7 | 3 | 20/10/2017 22:36 | MV | 22/12/2017 05:01 | MV |
| Concept of Muslim | 204 | 23 | 21/10/2017 00:01 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:59 | MV |
| Journey | 21 | 11 | 21/10/2017 00:02 | MV | 22/12/2017 18:05 | MV |
| Conversion | 5 | 2 | 16/11/2017 03:43 | MV | 16/11/2017 15:46 | MV |
| Knowledge | 22 | 13 | 21/10/2017 00:04 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:43 | MV |
| Personal | 31 | 12 | 21/10/2017 00:03 | MV | 23/12/2017 02:11 | MV |
| Social | 30 | 15 | 21/10/2017 00:02 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:59 | MV |
| Specific Religious Spiritual Concepts | 54 | 17 | 21/10/2017 00:05 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:58 | MV |
| Muhammad | 16 | 10 | 21/10/2017 00:05 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:14 | MV |
| Qur'an | 9 | 8 | 21/10/2017 00:05 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:14 | MV |
| Tawhid | 17 | 11 | 21/10/2017 00:05 | MV | 04/01/2018 15:51 | MV |
| Way of Life | 5 | 4 | 21/10/2017 00:02 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:14 | MV |

## Nodes

**Nodes** — Cases — Participants — Relationships — Node Matrices

Look for: | Search In — Nodes | Find Now | Clear | Advanced Find

| Name | Sources | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tawhid | 17 | 11 | 21/10/2017 00:05 | MV | 04/01/2018 15:51 | MV |
| Way of Life | 5 | 4 | 21/10/2017 00:02 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:14 | MV |
| Embodiment | 15 | 10 | 21/10/2017 00:06 | MV | 22/12/2017 18:01 | MV |
| Ethnicity Culture | 3 | 2 | 21/10/2017 00:07 | MV | 16/11/2017 15:50 | MV |
| Gender | 5 | 5 | 21/10/2017 00:07 | MV | 22/12/2017 16:56 | MV |
| Hijab | 13 | 6 | 21/10/2017 00:07 | MV | 22/12/2017 18:03 | MV |
| Practicing Practice | 58 | 18 | 21/10/2017 00:06 | MV | 04/01/2018 15:43 | MV |
| Religion vs Culture | 29 | 14 | 21/10/2017 00:03 | MV | 22/12/2017 18:01 | MV |
| METHODOLOGICAL | 2 | 2 | 20/10/2017 22:36 | MV | 22/12/2017 17:24 | MV |
| Context | 8 | 4 | 21/10/2017 00:08 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:31 | MV |
| Incidents | 31 | 13 | 21/10/2017 00:08 | MV | 21/11/2017 12:50 | MV |
| Fieldwork | 15 | 2 | 21/10/2017 00:08 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:32 | MV |
| Interviews | 14 | 11 | 21/10/2017 00:08 | MV | 22/12/2017 17:24 | MV |
| Interviewer Faith | 1 | 1 | 21/10/2017 00:09 | MV | 21/12/2017 15:27 | MV |
| Faith | 1 | 1 | 02/11/2017 13:25 | MV | 21/12/2017 15:27 | MV |
| My own experience | 6 | 3 | 02/11/2017 13:25 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:35 | MV |
| Snowball Sampling | 2 | 2 | 08/11/2017 13:47 | MV | 19/11/2017 16:41 | MV |
| Suggested questions | 12 | 11 | 08/11/2017 14:20 | MV | 22/12/2017 05:38 | MV |
| Tips | 0 | 0 | 16/11/2017 04:10 | MV | 16/11/2017 04:10 | MV |
| Consent | 12 | 2 | 16/11/2017 04:21 | MV | 21/12/2017 04:48 | MV |
| DBS | 7 | 3 | 16/11/2017 04:10 | MV | 04/01/2018 15:22 | MV |
| Shadowing | 0 | 0 | 16/11/2017 04:18 | MV | 16/11/2017 04:18 | MV |
| MUSLIM RE TEACHER | 1 | 1 | 20/10/2017 22:36 | MV | 21/11/2017 00:07 | MV |
| Challenges | 657 | 26 | 21/10/2017 00:26 | MV | 20/11/2017 22:22 | MV |
| Eschatological Tensions | 396 | 23 | 21/10/2017 00:28 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:46 | MV |
| Criticality | 55 | 15 | 21/10/2017 00:29 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:46 | MV |
| Drugs and Alcohol | 1 | 1 | 21/10/2017 00:29 | MV | 19/11/2017 17:15 | MV |
| Family | 4 | 2 | 19/11/2017 16:37 | MV | 20/12/2017 02:00 | MV |
| Homosexuality | 39 | 15 | 21/10/2017 00:28 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:13 | MV |
| Mainstream Islam | 44 | 12 | 13/11/2017 12:04 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:13 | MV |

Sources — Nodes — Classifications — Collections — Queries — Reports — Maps — Folders

Nodes

Look for:    ▾    Search In ▾ Nodes    Find Now   Clear   Advanced Find

Nodes

| Name | Sources | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mainstream Islam | | 12 | 44 13/11/2017 12:04 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:13 | MV |
| Gatekeepers | | 4 | 25 18/12/2017 18:28 | MV | 23/12/2017 02:11 | MV |
| Music | | 3 | 9 16/11/2017 04:25 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:02 | MV |
| Sex Ed | | 8 | 13 21/10/2017 00:28 | MV | 23/12/2017 02:18 | MV |
| Shirk | | 22 | 114 21/10/2017 00:28 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:10 | MV |
| Hinduism | | 9 | 25 21/10/2017 00:29 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:16 | MV |
| Trinity | | 4 | 10 21/10/2017 00:29 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:10 | MV |
| Strategies | | 12 | 38 21/10/2017 00:34 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:18 | MV |
| Neutrality | | 22 | 153 21/10/2017 00:27 | MV | 20/02/2018 16:56 | MV |
| Speech | | 10 | 39 16/11/2017 04:28 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:40 | MV |
| PREVENT FBVS | | 23 | 76 21/10/2017 00:27 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:03 | MV |
| Support | | 13 | 29 21/10/2017 00:34 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:40 | MV |
| Concept of Muslim RE Teacher | | 22 | 135 21/10/2017 00:12 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:17 | MV |
| Muslim RE teacher | | 6 | 39 21/10/2017 00:12 | MV | 24/02/2018 11:04 | MV |
| RE Teacher | | 9 | 28 21/10/2017 00:13 | MV | 23/12/2017 02:36 | MV |
| RE teacher who was Muslim | | 12 | 43 21/10/2017 00:12 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:17 | MV |
| Convergences | | 23 | 362 21/10/2017 00:22 | MV | 21/12/2017 02:40 | MV |
| Extra Roles | | 14 | 46 21/10/2017 00:25 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:43 | MV |
| PLK | | 21 | 159 21/10/2017 00:23 | MV | 20/02/2018 16:56 | MV |
| Role Model | | 21 | 97 21/10/2017 00:23 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:49 | MV |
| Leaders | | 12 | 42 18/11/2017 16:49 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:49 | MV |
| Muslim Parents | | 14 | 32 21/10/2017 00:24 | MV | 23/12/2017 02:31 | MV |
| Benefit | | 1 | 1 21/10/2017 00:24 | MV | 14/11/2017 13:04 | MV |
| Challenges | | 10 | 19 21/10/2017 00:24 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:28 | MV |
| Muslim Pupils | | 18 | 246 21/10/2017 00:23 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:39 | MV |
| Benefit | | 10 | 23 21/10/2017 00:24 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:39 | MV |
| Challenge | | 16 | 112 21/10/2017 00:24 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:25 | MV |
| Non-Muslim | | 11 | 19 13/11/2017 11:40 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:39 | MV |
| Ummah | | 1 | 1 22/12/2017 02:39 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:41 | MV |
| Unique | | 17 | 37 21/10/2017 00:23 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:10 | MV |

Cases
   Participants
Relationships
Node Matrices

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Reports
Maps
Folders

**Nodes**

Look for: | Search In | Nodes | Find Now | Clear | Advanced Find

**Nodes**

| Name | Sources | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Muslim | | 11 | 19 13/11/2017 11:40 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:39 | MV |
| Ummah | | 1 | 1 22/12/2017 02:39 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:41 | MV |
| Unique | | 17 | 37 21/10/2017 00:23 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:10 | MV |
| Breaking stereotypes | | 21 | 85 02/11/2017 13:28 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:54 | MV |
| VS Mosque Leadership | | 9 | 18 13/11/2017 11:57 | MV | 23/12/2017 02:36 | MV |
| Wider Events Incidents | | 10 | 32 02/11/2017 13:35 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:32 | MV |
| Wider Muslim Community | | 12 | 36 21/10/2017 00:25 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:05 | MV |
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| Challenges | | 11 | 27 21/10/2017 00:25 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:05 | MV |
| Shaped personal faith | | 12 | 17 14/11/2017 13:49 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:34 | MV |
| Subject Knowledge Islam | | 13 | 32 08/11/2017 14:05 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:32 | MV |
| Personal faith shaped pedagogy | | 11 | 15 14/11/2017 13:52 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:32 | MV |
| Teacher Embodiment | | 31 | 544 21/10/2017 00:14 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:41 | MV |
| Practice | | 28 | 303 21/10/2017 00:18 | MV | 20/12/2017 02:30 | MV |
| Alcohol | | 10 | 20 21/10/2017 00:19 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:36 | MV |
| Practicalities | | 25 | 100 21/10/2017 00:20 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:47 | MV |
| Prayer | | 16 | 43 21/10/2017 00:19 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:47 | MV |
| Ramadan | | 16 | 134 21/10/2017 00:18 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:35 | MV |
| Typology | | 19 | 66 21/10/2017 00:16 | MV | 21/10/2017 00:16 | MV |
| Ethos | | 14 | 41 21/10/2017 00:17 | MV | 22/12/2017 05:17 | MV |
| Behaviour Management | | 2 | 4 16/11/2017 04:25 | MV | 21/11/2017 13:45 | MV |
| Open | | 7 | 11 21/10/2017 00:16 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:35 | MV |
| Stasis | | 5 | 14 21/10/2017 00:17 | MV | 22/12/2017 18:27 | MV |
| Visibility | | 21 | 160 21/10/2017 00:14 | MV | 20/02/2018 16:56 | MV |
| Dress | | 15 | 33 21/10/2017 00:14 | MV | 20/02/2018 16:56 | MV |
| Ethnicity | | 13 | 25 21/10/2017 00:15 | MV | 20/02/2018 16:56 | MV |
| Hijab | | 14 | 41 21/10/2017 00:15 | MV | 23/12/2017 02:26 | MV |
| Microexpressions | | 3 | 8 21/10/2017 00:18 | MV | 22/12/2017 02:41 | MV |
| Spatial | | 2 | 4 16/11/2017 15:24 | MV | 20/12/2017 02:40 | MV |
| RACE | | 0 | 0 20/10/2017 22:36 | MV | 20/10/2017 22:36 | MV |

Nodes
- Nodes
- Cases
  - Participants
- Relationships
- Node Matrices

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Reports
Maps
Folders

Nodes
- Nodes
  - Cases
  - Participants
  - Relationships
  - Node Matrices

## Nodes

| Name | Sources | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| Racism | 23 | 198 | 21/10/2017 00:31 | MV | 05/01/2018 11:33 | MV |
| Institutional | 16 | 54 | 21/10/2017 00:31 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:56 | MV |
| Department | 1 | 2 | 16/11/2017 04:26 | MV | 16/11/2017 04:26 | MV |
| Parents | 11 | 21 | 21/10/2017 00:32 | MV | 05/01/2018 11:33 | MV |
| Pupils | 15 | 36 | 21/10/2017 00:31 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:45 | MV |
| Staff | 19 | 63 | 21/10/2017 00:32 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:49 | MV |
| Representation | 18 | 79 | 21/10/2017 00:31 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:49 | MV |
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| Concept of RE teacher | 24 | 148 | 21/10/2017 00:33 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:00 | MV |
| Pedagogy | 17 | 60 | 21/10/2017 00:33 | MV | 20/02/2018 16:56 | MV |
| Qualities | 17 | 28 | 21/10/2017 00:33 | MV | 05/01/2018 13:00 | MV |
| Subject Knowledge | 10 | 17 | 21/10/2017 00:33 | MV | 04/01/2018 15:30 | MV |
| New GCSE | 10 | 12 | 02/11/2017 13:09 | MV | 04/01/2018 15:30 | MV |
| Networks | 3 | 6 | 21/10/2017 00:35 | MV | 18/12/2017 22:04 | MV |
| SAVE RE | 1 | 1 | 20/11/2017 22:18 | MV | 20/11/2017 22:18 | MV |
| Stories | 0 | 0 | 21/10/2017 00:35 | MV | 21/10/2017 00:35 | MV |
| Best experiences | 13 | 14 | 21/10/2017 00:35 | MV | 05/01/2018 14:18 | MV |
| Worst Experiences | 10 | 11 | 21/10/2017 00:35 | MV | 21/11/2017 13:42 | MV |
| SPATIAL | 0 | 0 | 16/11/2017 04:19 | MV | 16/11/2017 04:19 | MV |
| Classrooms | 18 | 57 | 16/11/2017 04:19 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:27 | MV |
| Corridors | 2 | 7 | 16/11/2017 04:26 | MV | 20/12/2017 05:38 | MV |
| Playground | 1 | 1 | 21/12/2017 15:11 | MV | 21/12/2017 15:11 | MV |
| Prayer facilities | 9 | 25 | 16/11/2017 15:23 | MV | 04/01/2018 16:17 | MV |
| School location | 5 | 7 | 16/11/2017 04:20 | MV | 05/01/2018 10:14 | MV |
| Staff Meeting | 1 | 5 | 20/12/2017 03:11 | MV | 21/12/2017 05:54 | MV |
| Staff Room | 7 | 20 | 16/11/2017 04:12 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:15 | MV |
| Social | 3 | 8 | 16/11/2017 05:21 | MV | 05/01/2018 12:15 | MV |

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Reports
Maps
Folders

Cardiff School of Social Sciences
Head of School Professor Amanda Coffey FAcSS
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol Caerdydd
Pennaeth yr Ysgol Yr Athro Amanda Coffey FAcSS

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Cymru Y Deyrnas Unedig

11th February 2016

Our ref: SREC/1817

Matthew Vince
SHARE

Dear Matthew

Your project entitled *'Muslim RE teachers and Islam in UK state schools'* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University following its meeting on 3rd February 2016 and you can now commence the project.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form. Please inform the SREC when the project has ended. Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Alan Felstead
<u>Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee</u>

cc:     PGR Office – SHARE
        Supervisors:   S Gilliat-Ray & M Hadfield

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**APPROVAL LETTER**

8th February 2017

Our ref: SREC/1817

Matthew Vince
SOCSI

Dear Matthew

Your amendment to the project entitled '*Muslim RE teachers and Islam in UK state schools*' has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now continue the project.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Alan Felstead
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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## **Participant Consent Form: Teacher**

Name of Researcher: Matthew Vince

Name of Participant:

| Research Activity | Signed Consent (Please Initial) |
|---|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. | |
| 2. I have had the time and opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | |
| 3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. | |
| 4. I agree to take part in the study. | |
| 5. I agree that direct quotations can be made from the information I give. | |

_____      \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_          _____

Name of participant                             Date                  Signature

_____      \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_          _____

Name of person taking consent                   Date                  Signature

2 copies: 1 for participant and 1 for research file

Please return to: *Matthew Vince*, SHARE Postgraduate Mailbox, 5th Floor, John Percieval Building, Cardiff University, Cardiff, CF10 3EG

# **Participant Information Sheet – Teacher**

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project exploring the experiences of Muslim RE teachers teaching in UK state-schools.  The following will give you a short overview of myself, the project, and what this means for you and the information you give.  Before you decide to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done, and what it will involve for yourself.

**Please take the time to read the following information carefully.** Please do not hesitate to ask further questions or seek further clarification.

## Who am I?

My name is Matthew Vince and I am a PhD student at Cardiff University. I am supervised by two Senior Research Professors from Religious Studies and Social Sciences. This research has the ethical approval of the Social Sciences School Research Ethics Committee and is funded by the Jameel Scholarship programme. Before the PhD I graduated from Exeter University's Secondary RE PGCE to become a fully qualified RE teacher. I then worked as a Religious Studies teacher in a state-school, where I was involved in teaching Christianity and Islam at GCSE level.  I have further academic training in Islam from my Masters and Bachelors study, which underpin my interest in the experiences of Muslims in Britain.  I also have a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check to conduct this research.

For further information please see my Cardiff University profile: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/research-students/view/155854-vince-matthew

## Why am I doing this research?

Whilst there have been many educational studies exploring the experiences of BME (Black & Minority Ethnic) teachers, there have been very few that reflect the experiences of Muslim teachers.  In this project I intend to fill this gap by drawing attention to your experiences as a Muslim in a highly professional role and explore how you understand Islam from a personal and professional perspective.  Your experiences are therefore extremely valuable to filling this gap in the research - helping to illuminate the otherwise unknown experiences of Muslims in Britain.

## Who can take part?

I am inviting people who identify themselves as a Muslim and work in state-schools as a Religious Education teacher.  Ideally the participant would be someone who specialised in Religious Education during their Initial Teacher Training, but this is not a requirement.  As 'Religious Education' is known under many names, by 'Religious Education' I mean a subject which:

- Is titled 'Religious Education' or…
- Is under a different name but includes a focus on world religions, i.e. 'World Religions', 'Theories of Knowledge', 'Citizenship Education', 'Philosophy and Beliefs' etc. or…
- Follows an established Religious Education GCSE specification: AQA, Edexcel, OCR, WJEC.

Furthermore, this may be at any Key Stage.

I am interested in the views and experiences of anyone who is interested in the experiences of Muslims in the RE classroom, and more widely about sharing their experiences of being a Muslim professional in Britain.

## What does the interview involve?

I would like you to take part in a **one-to-one interview**, in which we will simply discuss your experiences as a "Muslim RE teacher".  The interview is a chance for you to share your expertise, and personal understandings of being a Muslim and being an RE teacher, and how these come together in your role (if at all).

- Interviews typically last between 40 minutes – 1 hour.

- An audio recording will be taken for transcription and analysis.
- Ideally the interview would be face-to-face, but the interview can also be conducted over the phone/via Skype at your discretion.
- Consent would be sought before the interview.

## What will I do with the information?

All audio recordings and notes will be transcribed, and if you are interested I will give you a copy of the transcripts that I produce. The transcript will only be read by me and not be used for any other purpose than for my research analysis, from which findings will be produced.  Your participation and my findings will be the basis of my PhD thesis, and might also be used to publish articles in academic journals.

After the transcription I would like to offer to discuss with you a summary of the transcript, for your interest. This will be once the data collection period is complete.

You are welcome to read the thesis/articles produced after they are subject to submission and analysis.  This is to protect other participants.

## Will everything you say to me be kept private?

Yes.  All recordings and transcripts will not be shared with anyone else, and will be solely used for my research analysis. All files will be encrypted on a password locked external hard drive, and everything will be kept in a secure place at my home.  All data will also be anonymised according to established research practice.  In the recording, transcript, and writing the names of yourself, as well as the school and those people who you mention, will be changed so you, and the school, will not be identifiable.

Occasionally, I may take direct quotes from the information when writing.  These quotes will remain anonymised as above so you will not be identifiable from the quote.  Please acknowledge whether I can use direct quotes from your transcripts on the *Participant Consent Form: Teacher*.

Also I will in no way disclose your personal religious identity, either when seeking consent from other parties in order to conduct this research (i.e. the headmaster) or when conducting the research itself.  A similar information sheet has been produced that does not specify that I am researching about the experiences of Muslim RE teachers, but about the teaching of *Religion in UK schools*.  This measure has been implemented to protect your personal identity.

## What if you change your mind about taking part?

If you decide to take part then this is your voluntary decision, therefore you are also free to withdraw from the study at any point you wish, without giving a reason.  You may also request that any prior data collected be destroyed and no longer form part of my analysis.

## Contact Information

If you have any questions concerning the research, feel free to contact me at [vincem@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:vincem@cardiff.ac.uk) / 0**********.  I would be happy to answer any questions and look forward to meeting you.

If you are happy to proceed, please could you sign and email/send the attached *Participant Consent Form: Teacher*.

**Please see the *Participant Consent Form: Teacher*.**

**Participant Supplementary Consent Form: Teacher**

Name of Researcher: Matthew Vince

Name of Participant:

| Research Activity | Signed Consent (Please Initial) |
|---|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the supplementary information sheet for the observation/shadowing. | |
| 2. I have had the time and opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | |
| 3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. | |
| 4. I agree to take part in the observation/shadowing. | |
| 5. I agree that direct quotations can be made from the information I give. | |
| 6. I agree to distribute the required *Parental Consent Forms* for the pupils in my classes. | |

_____          _ _ / _ _ / _ _          _____

Name of participant                                  Date                 Signature

_____          _ _ / _ _ / _ _          _____

Name of person taking consent                    Date                 Signature

2 copies: 1 for participant and 1 for research file

Please return to: *Matthew Vince*, SHARE Postgraduate Mailbox, 5th Floor, John Percieval Building, Cardiff University, Cardiff, CF10 3EG

## Appendix 11: Teacher Shadowing Information Sheet

# <u>Shadowing Supplementary Information Sheet – Teacher</u>

Further to your participation in my doctoral research project, I would like to invite you to participate in a period of shadowing.  This is a great opportunity for me to really get to know you, and your practice, in a school setting.  This Information Sheet is supplementary to the Information Sheet you have already received, which outlines the project more broadly.

**Please take the time to read the following information carefully.** Please do not hesitate to ask further questions or seek further clarification.

## What is shadowing?

Shadowing has been widely used as a training method, where a trainee watches a practitioner work to understand their role.  Initial Teaching Training itself is based on a method of shadowing.  Similarly, I would like to shadow you with an aim to better understanding your work and practice within the school setting.  This will enrich our previous conversations in the interview.  As before, this has been ethically approved by Social Sciences School Research Ethics Committee.

## What does shadowing involve?

The shadowing would require the following:

- I would like to observe your work, accompanying as you go about your ordinary tasks.  This would be primarily through…
    - Observing your teaching in lessons, to get a sense of your practice.
    - Attending meetings, to get a sense of the institution.
    - Accompanying you around the school, to get a sense of the "social" aspect.
- I will not be recording conversations or encounters electronically or verbatim, but I would like to be writing notes (in a notebook) as I go along.
- I would like to shadow over a period of a half-term to a minimum of two weeks (a full timetable).  This would be over the course of the school day – when you arrive to when you leave.
    - I anticipate that it would be three-four days a week during this period.
- Any other staff or classes whom we meet during the day should be introduced to me, informed as to why I am with you, and should be given the right to ask me not to observe the encounter with you.
    - To this end, I will carry leaflets with me to give them briefly outlining why I am there.
- I would need consent from the parents/guardians of the pupils whose classes you teach, including a tutor group.  This would involve you distributing these letters in a lesson at least two weeks before the shadow start date.  This would involve playing a short video (approx. 1 minute) and then handing out letters in class to take home.
    - I require you to **sign consent** that you will distribute these materials in this manner.


## What does shadowing not involve?

Shadowing is intended to be as unobtrusive or impactful on your daily work as possible.  As such:

- I am not there to assess your practice but just there to see your practice, with regard to our discussions in the interview and the wider scope of the project.
    - There no extra or special work to do, nor do I require any dedicated time for discussion.  As the emphasis is on your "normal day", anything extra would detract from the aims of the shadowing!
    - Similarly, I do not need, nor will not capture, any information about specific pupils – such as behaviour.  I am not observing them.  At most general questions may be noted (a class asked…, there were questions about…), to not identify any pupils.
    - The same applies to other staff.
- If anything I do is intrusive or inhibiting you can ask me to stop doing it.
    - You can ask me at any time not to accompany you.

- o  If explicitly asked, I will not record the details of any conversations, encounters or exchanges that you or the other people concerned.
- To protect your identity the specific details and religious focus of the project will not be shared with the school. The project will be conducted under the guise of a general study into aspects of teacher identity and RE practice.

## What benefits does taking part offer?

I am happy to provide other benefits to you or the school:
- Taking part in the project can count towards CPD.
- I am also happy to run a training session for staff/pupils after the shadowing has been completed on a pertinent topic to my specialism.
- You will be invited to any events, further projects, training, or materials that are produced from the project, or from the Islam-UK Centre at Cardiff University.
- I can write a separate *Service Report* for the school based on my time there. This could be generic or RE specific. Again it will in no way be an assessment of your practice, but based on general observations of the school.

## What if you change your mind about taking part?

If you decide to take part then this is your voluntary decision, therefore you are also free to withdraw from the study at any point you wish, without giving a reason. You may also request that any prior data collected be destroyed and no longer form part of my analysis.

## Contact Information

If you have any questions concerning the research, feel free to contact me at vincem@cardiff.ac.uk / 0**********. I would be happy to answer any questions and look forward to meeting you.

If you are happy to proceed, please sign the *Participant Supplementary Consent Form: Teacher*.

**Please see the *Participant Consent Form: Teacher*.**

## **Participant Consent Form: School**

Name of Researcher: Matthew Vince

Name and position of School Contact:

| Research Activity | Signed Consent (Please Initial) |
|---|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above research project. | |
| 2. I have had the time and opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | |
| 3. I understand that the school's and member of staff's participation is voluntary and that the school is free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. | |
| 4. I will allow the study to take place in the school with the identified member of staff. | |
| 5. I will allow the researcher to use official school communication channels to contact parents, if required. | |
| 6. I will allow the researcher to take photographs of the school site for their reflection. | |

_____     \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_          _____

Name of School Contact                        Date                    Signature

_____     \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_          _____

Name of person taking consent                 Date                    Signature

2 copies: 1 for participant and 1 for research file

## Appendix 13: School Shadowing Information Sheet

## <u>Shadowing Information Sheet – School</u>

I am looking to conduct research in your school for my doctoral research project *Religion in UK state-schools*. The following will give you a short overview of myself, the project, what this means for the participant and the information that is given.

I have already received interest and consent from **TEACHER**, who will be the participant in this study.

**TEACHER** is suitable due to their teaching experience and pedagogical approach to RE.  However, **I also require written consent to conduct research on the school site**.  Therefore it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve, in order to have me on site.

**Please take time to read the following information carefully.** Do not hesitate to seek further clarification.

### Who am I?

My name is Matthew Vince and I am a PhD student at Cardiff University. I am supervised by two Senior Research Professors from Religious Studies and Social Sciences. This research has the ethical approval of the Social Sciences School Research Ethics Committee and is funded by the Jameel Scholarship programme. Before the PhD I graduated from Exeter University's Secondary RE PGCE to become a fully qualified RE teacher, and worked as a Religious Studies teacher in a state-school teaching at GCSE level.  I also have a valid Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check to conduct this research.

For further information please see my Cardiff University profile: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/research-students/view/155854-vince-matthew

### Why am I doing this research?

The representation of religions in Religious Education has long been questioned in research, particularly surrounding the representation in teaching and textbooks.  In this project I intend to fill this gap by exploring how RE teachers from different backgrounds and in different schools teach about religions.  The experiences of RE teachers are therefore extremely valuable to filling this gap in the research, helping to illuminate pedagogy and representation of religion in a variety of UK classrooms.

### What is shadowing?

Shadowing has been widely used as a training method, where a trainee watches a practitioner work to understand their role.  Initial Teaching Training itself is based on a method of shadowing.  Similarly, I would like to shadow **TEACHER** with an aim to better understanding their work and practice within a school setting.

### What does shadowing involve?

The shadowing does require the following:

- I would like to observe the participant's work, accompanying as them as they go about their ordinary tasks.
    - This would be primarily through observing teaching in lessons, attending meetings, and accompanying around the school.
    - I would not be alone on the school site at any point, or alone with pupils.  I also have a valid DBS check for this research.
- I will not be recording conversations or encounters electronically or verbatim, but I would like to be writing notes (in a notebook) as I go along.
    - These notes will be purely focussed on the participant's practice.  It will not be an assessment of their practice.

- - o Nor will it capture information about specific pupils/staff; behaviour, responses, comments etc. At most general questions may be noted (a class asked…, there were questions about…), to not identify any pupils/staff.
- I would like to shadow over a period of a half-term to a minimum of two weeks. This would be over the course of the school day – when the participant arrives and leaves.
  - o This will be agreed upon with the participant beforehand.
  - o I anticipate that it would be three-four days a week during this period.
- I would need consent from the parents/guardians of the pupils in the participant's classes, and tutor group (if applicable). I require your consent to use the following school channels to distribute *Parental Consent Letters*.
  - o The participant would be required to consent to distributing these letters in a lesson two weeks before the start of the shadowing process. This would involve playing a short video (approx. 1 minute) and then handing out letters in class to take home.
  - o This would be opt-in/opt-out consent for pupils below/above 13 years old.
  - o Follow up for those who have not given opt-in consent, via letters sent home by the school office.
  - o All letters will be pre-stamped to incur no expense.
- Any other staff or classes whom we meet during the day should be introduced to me, informed as to why I am there, and should be given the right to ask me not to observe the encounter.
  - o To this effect, a 'Summary Information Leaflet' about the project will be given to them on request.
- I would like to take a few photographs of the school for my personal reflection.
  - o This would capture no people. Any identifying aspects would be cut from the images.

## What does shadowing not involve?

The shadowing does not involve:

- An assessment of practice, for staff, pupils, or the school itself.
- There is no extra or special work to do, nor do I require any dedicated time for discussion. As such there is no impact to the participant's workload.
- Similarly, I do not need, nor will not capture, any information about specific pupils – such as behaviour. I am not observing them. The same applies to other staff.

## What benefits does taking part offer?

I am happy to provide other benefits to you or the school:
- I am happy to run a training session for staff/pupils after the shadowing has been completed on a pertinent topic to my specialism.
- The participant will be invited to any events, further projects, or materials that are produced from the project, or from Cardiff University.
- I can write a separate *Service Report* for the school based on my time there. This could be generic or RE specific.

## What will I do with the information?

All hand-written notes will be transcribed, and only the participant may request to see the transcript produced. The transcript will only be read by me and not be used for any other purpose than for my research analysis, from which findings will be produced. The information given will inform my findings and will be the basis of my PhD thesis, and might also be used to publish articles in academic journals. Participants are welcome to a summary transcript.

All parties involved will be anonymised throughout – in the transcription, analysis, and further writing. This means that neither the school, staff, pupils, nor parents will be identifiable.

The information will be kept in a secure location in a portable locked cabinet. When in person, my notebook will be kept with me always. Transcriptions of the documents will be kept on a password-protected drive, and will be encrypted, as per data protection protocols.

## What if you change your mind?

**TEACHER** has voluntarily decided to take part.  Similarly, it is your voluntary decision to allow me to conduct this research on site.  Therefore, you are also free to withdraw at any point you wish, without giving a reason.  Doing so does not prevent the participant from engaging in the research in another capacity.

Contact Information

If you have any questions concerning the research, feel free to contact me at vincem@cardiff.ac.uk / 0**********.  I would be happy to answer any questions and look forward to meeting you.

If you are happy to proceed, please sign the *Participant Consent Form: School*.  This can be returned via email, post, or I can collect this in person when I arrive.

**Please see the *Participant Consent Form: School*.**

**OPT-IN PERMISSION LETTER**

Matthew Vince

Postgraduate Mailbox,

School of History, Archaeology and Religion,

John Percival Building,

Cardiff University,

Cardiff

CF10 3EG

vincem@cardiff.ac.uk

**[DATE LETTER SENT]**

RE: Important information about a research project being conducted at your child's school – *Religion in UK schools* doctoral research project.

Dear Parents / Carers,

My name is Matthew Vince and I am a PhD student in the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University. I am currently working on a research project looking at how religion is taught to pupils in schools across the UK. The study is being supervised by two Senior Professors in Religious Studies and the Social Sciences.

**[HEADTEACHERS NAME]** would like **[SCHOOL NAME]** to participate in the project. I am interested in how religion is being taught in schools across the UK – what topics are being taught, what resources are being used, and what examples teachers are drawing upon.

I am looking to observe RE lessons with your child's class, and I require your child's consent to be in the classroom whilst I am conducting these observations.  I am not interested in their responses, their behaviour, or what they say or do at all.  Rather I am solely focussing on how the teacher teaches the lesson.  I will be making hand-written notes during these lessons.

No information about your child will be collected.  No recording devices will be used, other than my hand-written notes.  The information is purely for my research purposes.  All information is anonymised according to established research practices, including the school, the teacher, the class, the city, and the county, and is securely stored.

I am a second year student and have been trained by, and supervised by, professional researchers at the university that have conducted similar research. I have a Disclosure Barring Service criminal record check from the police in order to conduct these observations. Furthermore, my research has been accepted by the university's *Social Sciences School Research Ethics Committee* to ensure that it meets ethical guidelines. Studies involving children at any stage are subject to the fullest review by the committee. I have also obtained consent from the school's headteacher and the class teacher before beginning the study.  I have also co-ordinated with the teacher to ensure no disruption to the lessons, as observations are a regular part of teaching.

Although **[HEADTEACHERS NAME]** and **[SCHOOL TEACHER]** has most kindly allowed me access to the school, I need your consent to observe your child's class.  If consent is not given this will mean that I will not consider any interaction with that child during the lesson, and no information will be collected that involves them.

If you do **ALLOW** your child's class to be observed, please respond by **EITHER**:

Returning a signed copy of the slip below to:
FAO Matthew Vince

Room 5.22,

School of History, Archaeology and Religion,

John Percival Building,

Cardiff University,

Cardiff

CF10 3EG

Or by contacting me by email at: vincem@cardiff.ac.uk – with a scanned image of the signed consent slip.

If you are happy for your child to take part I must receive a signed copy of the slip before the observation date starting on **[DATE]**.  If nothing is received I will assume you are not happy for your child to take part. Should you decide after the study that you no longer want your child's information included, simply contact me and I will withdraw it.  If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me at vincem@cardiff.ac.uk. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Vince

………………………………………………………………………………………………

I **GIVE** permission for my child to participate in Matthew Vince's Doctoral Research project.

Name of pupil……………………………………………………………………...

Signature of parent / guardian……………………………………………………..

**OPT-OUT PERMISSION LETTER**

Matthew Vince

Postgraduate Mailbox,

School of History, Archaeology and Religion,

John Percival Building,

Cardiff University,

Cardiff

CF10 3EG

vincem@cardiff.ac.uk

**[DATE LETTER SENT]**

RE: Important information about a research project being conducted at your child's school – *Religion in UK schools* doctoral research project.

Dear Parents / Carers,

My name is Matthew Vince and I am a PhD student in the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University. I am currently working on a research project looking at how religion is taught to pupils in schools across the UK. The study is being supervised by two Senior Professors in Religious Studies and the Social Sciences.

**[HEADTEACHERS NAME]** would like **[SCHOOL NAME]** to participate in the project. I am interested in how religion is being taught in schools across the UK – what topics are being taught, what resources are being used, and what examples teachers are drawing upon.

I am looking to observe RE lessons with your child's class, and I require your child's consent to be in the classroom whilst I am conducting these observations. I am not interested in their responses, their behaviour, or what they say or do at all. Rather I am solely focussing on how the teacher teaches the lesson. I will be making hand-written notes during the lessons.

No information about your child will be collected. No recording devices will be used, other than my hand-written notes. The information is purely for my research purposes. All information is anonymised according to established research practices, including the school, the teacher, the class, the city, and the county, and is securely stored.

I am a second year student and have been trained by, and supervised by, professional researchers at the university that have conducted similar research. I have a Disclosure Barring Service criminal record check from the police in order to conduct these observations. Furthermore, my research has been accepted by the university's *Social Sciences School Research Ethics Committee* to ensure that it meets ethical guidelines. Studies involving children at any stage are subject to the fullest review by the committee. I have also obtained consent from the school's headteacher and the class teacher before beginning the study.  I have also co-ordinated with the teacher to ensure no disruption to the lessons, as observations are a regular part of teaching.

Although **[HEADTEACHERS NAME]** and **[SCHOOL TEACHER]** has most kindly allowed me access to the school, I will not include your child if you object to their participation but you need to let me know this.  This will mean that I will not consider any interaction with that child during the lesson, and no information will be collected that involves them.

If you do **NOT** wish your child to take part, please respond by **EITHER**:

Returning a signed copy of the slip below to:
FAO Matthew Vince

Room 5.22,

School of History, Archaeology and Religion,

John Percival Building,

Cardiff University,

Cardiff

CF10 3EG

Or by contacting me by email at: vincem@cardiff.ac.uk – with a scanned image of the signed consent slip.

If you are happy for your child to take part, you do not need to do anything! If you are not, I must receive a signed copy of the slip before the observation date starting on **[DATE]**.  If nothing is received I will assume you are happy for your child to take part. Should you decide after the study that you no longer want your child's information included, simply contact me and I will withdraw it. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me at vincem@cardiff.ac.uk. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Vince

…………………………………………………………………………………

I **DO NOT** give permission for my child to participate in Matthew Vince's Doctoral Research project.

Name of pupil……………………………………………………………………...

Signature of parent / guardian…………………………………………………..

## Appendix 16: Pupils Project Summary Speech (recorded)

Hi my name is Matthew Vince and I am a researcher from Cardiff University.

My research is looking at how different RE teachers across the country teach RE.

Your teacher has kindly agreed to let me in and watch her teach, and for me to make notes.

The letter is to make you aware of this, and to ask you if you are happy for me to be in the classroom.  I am not interested in what you do as pupils, but what the teacher is doing.  I may write down some questions that you ask but I will not know your names or any details.

Please take your letters home and get your parents or guardians to read them.  If you are happy with me coming in, you do not have to do anything – simply chuck it in the bin!  If you are unhappy your parent must sign the slip on the back and return it to me.  How to do so is on the letter.

Many thanks.

# Appendix 17: NVivo Sample Storage

**Classifications**
- Source Classifications
- Case Classifications
- Relationship Types

Look for | Search In | Case Classificati | Find Now | Clear | Advanced Find

## Case Classifications

| Name | Created On | Type | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Person | 07/11/2016 11:23 | | MV | 27/02/2018 15:06 | MV |
| Sex | 07/11/2016 11:23 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 12:36 | MV |
| Age Group | 07/11/2016 11:23 | Text | MV | 10/07/2017 14:52 | MV |
| Occupation | 07/11/2016 11:23 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 12:36 | MV |
| Country of Birth | 07/11/2016 11:23 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 12:38 | MV |
| Ethnicity | 07/11/2016 12:27 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 12:36 | MV |
| Label | 07/11/2016 12:28 | Text | MV | 24/02/2018 10:59 | MV |
| UK Area | 07/11/2016 12:29 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 12:36 | MV |
| Dress | 07/11/2016 12:32 | Text | MV | 06/06/2017 16:36 | MV |
| Teacher Age | 07/11/2016 12:34 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 12:36 | MV |
| Career Progress | 07/11/2016 12:56 | Text | MV | 15/11/2016 14:29 | MV |
| School Type | 07/11/2016 12:59 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 12:59 | MV |
| Interview | 07/11/2016 13:05 | Text | MV | 07/11/2016 13:05 | MV |
| Name | 13/11/2016 16:37 | Text | MV | 24/02/2018 11:14 | MV |
| Denomination | 13/11/2016 16:38 | Text | MV | 10/07/2017 14:56 | MV |

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Reports
Maps
Folders