

**An Ethnographic Study of the Ways  
in Which Faith is Manifested in Two  
Primary Schools**

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## Abstract

Fostering religious commitment in schools and considering children's cultural diversity arguably enhances pupils' tolerance and integration, which may have the potential to reduce racism and discrimination. Faith schools are religiously and culturally diverse institutions and typically appreciated for their core values, good behaviour and academic standards. However, their impact on school culture and ethos is under explored. Although, the role of faith has gained attention both in policy and practice, relatively little is known about its impact in the context of primary education. As such, this research explores the complex influence of faith on school culture and ethos. In addition, critical analysis is undertaken to investigate the impact of faith on pupils' behaviour and understanding in school. The main research aims are to: explore the multiple ways in which faith is manifested in two schools, determine the influence of faith on school culture and ethos, and establish the impact of faith on pupils' behaviours and understanding in school.

This research takes an ethnographic approach to explore how faith is manifested in two primary schools in the North West of England. The ethnography enabled a deeper immersion in to the school culture as data were generated through observations, interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis in two schools: A denomination school, Church of England, and a community school with an Islamic ethos. The research was conducted in the North West of England which has many diverse faith-based schools. Critical Race and Feminist Theories were used as lenses of analysis to examine faith in school. Critical Race Theory is a framework employed to examine the role of race and power in education.

This research provides rich ethnographic description and analysis of faith as understood, practiced and experienced in the two schools. The findings reveal two major themes, first, a mismatch between school policy/values and its practice. Second, a lack of integration of staff and children into the school. Despite schools' efforts to embrace diversity and encourage integration, schools policies were found to be empty rhetoric with regards to fostering religious commitment and cultural diversity. Exploring the issue of recognising cultural diversity within schools, findings indicated that both schools did not

acknowledge or teach other cultural traditions, therefore, impacting on issues of integration. Poor behaviour, bullying and racism amongst children were major issues at both schools. Data analysis suggests the source of misbehaviour was due to the lack of emphasis placed on teaching about different religions, insufficient knowledge of cultural traditions and lack of visits to places of worship. This research concludes that there is a need for schools to develop awareness of religions and cultural diversity; thereby, encouraging integration, community cohesion and respect for similarities and differences.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my two children:

Muna and Mohammed



## Abbreviations

Acronym	Signifies
BHA	British Humanist Association
CofE	Church of England
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EFL	English as a First Language
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector (Education)
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NC	National Curriculum
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PE	Physical Education
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RC	Roman Catholic
RE	Religious Education
SATs	Statutory Assessment Tests
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TA	Teacher Assistant
TES	Times Educational Supplement
US	United States

# Chapter 1

## My Background: A Semi-autobiography

### 1.1. Introduction

This thesis is about my interest in exploring the ways in which faith is manifested in school. It is essentially concerned with how faith influences school culture and ethos, therefore, establishing the impact of faith on pupils' behaviour in school. This research also explores the perception of race and ethnicity within schools. It builds on the existing knowledge of faith schools and the importance of school ethos. Reviewing literature (e.g. Plummer, 2000; Sikes, 2012) the term autobiography implies telling and documenting one's own life. According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), to understand something which is personal, it is critical we know about the person. In this context, Given (2008) argues that autobiography is one of the most valuable instruments for exploring the human domain in all its depth, complexity, and richness. Such literature provides an insight into why life history has come to be so popular for studying a wide range of topics related to education and schooling. For example, Connell (1996) explored masculinity and gender strategies in schools, Sikes (1997) researched parents who were also teachers and Molinari (2003) focused on pupils who have been excluded from mainstream schools. Moreover, Goodson (1981) and Somekh and Lewin (2006) emphasised the importance of using a semi-autobiography when conducting an ethnographic research. This implies providing a detailed account of one's life together with referencing literature and research relevant to the biography.

For the purpose of this research, I recalled, interpreted and documented significant portions of my present life and past experiences. This was carried out by taking a semi-autobiographical approach and as this is an objective piece of research, I combined and strengthened this approach with references including literature, theories and research (and more from section 1.5 onwards). It is not about distance or being dispassionate, but my subjectivity is present right from the start. In this context Goodson and Sikes (2001:72-73) highlight that life history has considerable potentials as a strategy for professional development, "helping educationalists, at all stages of their career to reflect critically on their beliefs and practices leading to informed development and change". The

argument is that one cannot fully understand this research and my journey without having this semi-autobiographical chapter. The semi-autobiography ties me to the processes of this research and to the context of faith and the questions of the research. First person has been used in this thesis because my research is all about locating myself within it.

As I begin putting into words my understanding of research in the field of education in relation to faith, Critical Race and Feminist Theories, and how they are connected to children's behaviour and understanding, I feel compelled to acknowledge that being a female from an ethnic background who grew up in a multicultural community, attended its schools and continue to live there. I have lived an educational experience that clearly connects with some of the literature I have reviewed (see chapters 2 and 3) – specifically, literature from the perspective of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist theory (see chapter 4) as it pertains to the schools' system and racism. I write this semi-autobiography to reveal my background, gender, and ethnicity as they contribute significantly to who I am as a person, a student, and a researcher.

Coming from a religious and highly educated background, I have become interested in exploring the links between faith and education. This research reveals my curiosity of the ways in which faith is manifested in primary schools. This thesis incorporates my personal background, experience of faith education and knowledge of teaching and learning. My knowledge about education, recent university teaching experience in primary schools and personal direct contact with a number of teachers and children have served to broaden my horizons about teaching and learning. I have been involved in various events and occasions as a teaching assistant, which mainly included helping children with reading and writing. My voluntary participation of community weekend school (*Madrassa*) has added to my experience of education as well as deepening my understanding of cultural and social processes within the local school community. This has benefited me greatly during the research (see chapter 7 section 7.4). Moreover, my interest in selecting primary schools for this research also stemmed from my undergraduate studies and the subject matter covered within my teaching degree (4 years BA Honours Primary Education with Qualified Teacher Status, QTS, 2003-2007).

Such experiences have produced a number of significant questions which need to be explored. These relate to a variety of broad themes, including the school culture and ethos, staff's interaction with one another, ways in which children integrate with each other, school assemblies and religious activities. Where relevant in this chapter, I included links from my personal life with various aspects of the initial pilot and the ethnography, therefore, helping to reveal and strengthen the connections between me and the research.

## **1.2. My Primary Education in Saudi Arabia**

Originally, I am a Palestinian from Gaza but was born in Saudi Arabia. I lived in Saudi for eight years with my parents who arrived there in 1982. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state in Southeast Asia, in which Arabic is the official language and Islam is the official religion (El-Sanabary, 1994). The *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) serves as both the constitution and the legal framework (Bloomfield, 1981; Roy, 1992). I lived in a conservative Islamic environment and religion was very evident in the increased Islamic programmes on television, articles and newspapers as well as in the ritual celebration of popular Islamic festivals. Islam has remained the primary cohesive ideology in Saudi Arabia, the source of legitimacy for the monarchy, and the prevailing system of moral guidance and spirituality. This has been emphasised by Rihani (1983) and Al-Rasheed (2008), who claim that the vast majority of the Saudi population are living in conservative societies which have been manifested in individual behaviour, government policies, education, literature and in Mosque sermons. Committees for public morality used to walk in the streets in order to ensure that shops are closed at prayer time and that modest dress is maintained in public (Esposito, 1991; Prokop, 2003). Living in such an environment has shaped my views about the importance of faith and Religious Education (RE) on my research.

Saudi Arabia can be described as a complex society, eager to enjoy the fruits of advancement on all social and economic levels (Al-Farsy, 1986). At the same time, Altorki (1986) believes that there is a determination to preserve the country's religious and social traditions. In such a context, I obtained most of my primary education in a single gender school which was the case for all schools in Saudi Arabia. This was due to the fact that Islam frowns upon the mixing of both genders in certain situations (Abdel Bakri and Abubakr, 1988; Al-Khuli, 1991). I attended a girls' school in which the headteacher, staff and other

employees were female, including the caretaker. Many challenges were faced by the family during our residency in Saudi as we were of a Palestinian nationality and non-Saudi passport holders. On a private level it has expanded my insight of religion and strengthened my relationship with the family. On a public level, it has inspired me to follow my interest of becoming a teacher and researching the field of religion and education. Due to the struggles faced in Saudi, I was able to empathise with some children and bilingual assistants from my research, feeling segregated and devalued by their school (see chapter 7 section 7.2). In addition, I faced similar challenges of being acknowledged and accepted when conducting the initial pilot study (explained in chapter 5 section 5.5) which helped to significantly shape my research and methodology.

Al-Zaid (1988) emphasised that the conservative policy of the Saudi government has also influenced its education system. According to Redissi (2008) and Azzam (1996), conservative religious scholars have powerful influence on government policy and education, which cannot be ignored. The study of Islam dominates the content of school subjects, in particular the memorisation and interpretation of the Qur'an (Redissi, 2008). The purpose of Islamic education was to ensure that all children would understand God's laws and apply the Islamic tradition to everyday life. This factor was especially significant for my research as I explored how faith was manifested in a Church of England school (C of E) and a school with an Islamic ethos.

Women's education in Saudi Arabia was heavily influenced by religious conservative trends (Alireza, 1987). It did not deviate from the original purpose of female education, which was to make women good wives and mothers and to prepare them for acceptable jobs such as teaching and nursing, which was believed to suit their nature (Shehabi, 2008). This implies that women's education is essential in Islam. Despite the differences, with regards to feminist theory, Bryant (2007) argues that they all share common factors – they look at the differences in society between men and women and try to see how these problems could be solved (see chapter 4 section 4.3). I connect with multicultural feminists (Ponzanesi, 2007) who believe that traditional feminists have been created by middle-class white women. Although I willingly and contentedly accepted to wear the *hijab* (headscarf) and cover my body, traditional feminist would view this as a form of oppression and a violation of women's liberty (Yamani, 2011). Similarly, I would not fit very well with socialist

feminists (Strobel and Davenport, 1999) as my upbringing has instilled in me the importance of family, and specifically the need for women to prioritise their schedule around their children. At the same time, I also encourage Muslim women to seek work as long as they are not discriminated on the bases of appearance, ethnicity or faith practices and as long as work does not conflict with religious issues such as the dress code.

Mirza (1998) and Rhys (2007) affirm that there are several misconceptions which depict Muslim women as oppressed and being forced to stay at home, to cook and clean. However, these misconceptions are far from the truth and I use myself as an example. Being a Muslim wife and mother, qualified as a primary school teacher and doing a PhD challenges all those assumptions. Moreover, having an Imam as a father and being raised in Saudi Arabia, my siblings are always encouraged to get higher education and my sister is currently working as a Pharmacist. In this respect, Jawad (1998) has pointed out that there is no either-or binary in Islam with regards to women's participation in society and education. I have thus challenged the culture that I was brought up in and used all available educational opportunities not only to get a university qualification, but also to excel and improve my qualifications, as encouraged in Islam, by embarking on this research.

In addition to 'Islamic Education' subject in Saudi primary schools, I also studied Maths, Science, Geography, History, Art and Arabic. My siblings and I were strongly encouraged by my parents (who were also educated) to develop in the area of reading and writing and they also dedicated a lot of time to teach us about the Islamic faith. Such an environment made me curious to find out the extent of influence educated parents have on their child's education in faith schools, which was my initial research question. However, due to challenges faced during the initial pilot study in a Roman Catholic school from teachers, parents and the general school culture, the focus of the PhD changed to assess how faith is manifested qualitatively in primary schools (see chapter 5 section 5.5). The research became more focused as various alterations were made to the aims, methodology and overall approach. The experience of the initial pilot study was extremely significant and helped me reflect positively on the project as a whole and in particular, the stated aims and methodology.

Furthermore, the Saudi national curriculum did not accommodate other world faiths and cultures (Field, 1982). From personal experience, pupils were never introduced to cultures other than the dominant Saudi culture. I remembered a negative 'you' and 'I' distinction, and experienced a multitude of strange attitudes. It is disappointing that school policies did not encourage tolerance towards those who came from other countries. The Islamic religion has a privileged position, as it is the religion of the country, and Mosques often aid schools (Al-Farsy, 1986; Al-Jarash, 1999). However, the curriculum only focused exclusively on teaching about the Saudi culture. Such factors could negatively impact on children's ability to comprehend multiculturalism and celebrate differences amongst cultures (see chapter 3 section 3.4). Al-Khuli (1991) and Al-Zaid (1988) emphasised that the curriculum would not include theories which address racism, equal opportunities, intercultural relationships, and racial justice. Children were never taught about other world religions or any other cultures or international customs and norms. My experience has led me to challenge such policies and argue for an education system which implements open-mindedness and understanding, especially when living in a multicultural society (see chapter 8 section 8.7). It also inspired me to explore faith and culture at two schools in England.

Although western values might not be suitable for Saudi Arabia, Robbins (2000) argues that the education system and curriculum needs to implement different strategies for looking at other people with whom we disagree. According to Burtonwood (1996) having a school with only national topics being taught and implemented, ignoring other world cultures, is a type of prejudice, discrimination and injustice. Children should be provided with an open vision to worldwide culture and traditions, which I myself encountered when I arrived in Britain. I was faced with a massive cultural shock, as a considerable number of pupils in my primary Church of England (C of E) school were from various religions and cultures. In the school back home, I had never come across a child of a different religion, thus leading to a complete lack of understanding and confidence. I struggled to fit into the school culture and it took a long time to get used to the school environment and routine. Reflecting on my own primary education in Saudi Arabia, I now believe that it was more about encouraging children to be traditional, rather than helping them to think independently or be aware of other cultures. Such an experience has brought up a number of questions in relation to my research, including how the school acknowledges other faiths and cultures

(see section 6.2, 6.4 and 7.2) and the influence of cultural exchange on children (see sections 6.4 and 7.3).

Furthermore, the Saudi community which I lived in was divided into two classes: the upper, who lived a life of luxury and wealth so would integrate mostly within their own class, while the rest, middle or lower class, were regarded as less fortunate and mixed only with each other (Sutuhi, 1995; Al-Rasheed, 2008). Foreigners like my family's situation would incorporate predominantly with other foreigners, hence feeling disintegrated, which very much links with findings in my research (see sections 7.2 and 7.4). Nevertheless, in the community there was no religious discrimination due to the one faith (Islam). According to Ajami (1980) nationality is very significant to the Saudi government, to the extent that the administrative policy was biased towards the native; therefore, foreign students were not allowed to continue higher education in any state university. Most families were forced to send their children either to private universities or neighbouring countries (El-Sanabary, 1994). In state schools places were often available to native pupils as a priority. Al-Zaid (1988) and Abdulaziz (1991) highlight that places in primary or secondary schools would not normally be available for every child, and those from other nationalities would struggle to find a place in a school. From a CRT perspective, which was used to analyse the data in this research, the above could be seen as a form of dominance labelled as 'white supremacy' (see chapter 4 section 4.2.3.4). The absence of unification leading to social division has inspired me to observe the extent to which, unequal opportunities affect a child's behaviour towards fellow members of the community, in particular within the school environment and how far it would influence their behaviour. Similarly, I became curious to know if faith schools favoured a particular faith over others, when allocating places for children.

### **1.3. My Primary Education in Britain**

When I moved to Britain I was 10 years old. From the earliest stages of social exposure to British society, my parents and I came across the notion of faith schools, which have been a landmark term to suggest religious affiliation (see chapter 2 section 2.4). I joined year six in a Church of England school and there I began the journey of learning. My parents' choice of school was determined by its geographical closeness. Although parents and the children may choose a school for a variety of reasons, Worpole (2000) emphasises that it is mostly due



to the fact that it is geographically close and ease of transportation. In truth we were not aware of the school's religious denomination or its Church affiliations.

I faced extreme challenges at the start, in both the learning and socialising process. I was unable to communicate with fellow students or teachers and many times I tried to use sign language or visual images to make myself understood. Unfortunately there were no children in my class who spoke Arabic, therefore eliminating the chance of interpreting for me. Although, I clearly remember how devastating and discouraging it was to have no Arabic speaking students in my class, I later met some children in lower classes who spoke Arabic and we became good friends. Speaking in my home language with other children boosted my self-esteem and confidence and was a tremendous support and encouragement throughout my education. Therefore, linking this experience with my research it was a true disbelief to observe how the two schools reacted to children speaking in other languages (see chapter 7 section 7.2.3).

Furthermore, as I was only ever educated in a girls school, it was exceptionally difficult when moving to the UK to work in a classroom environment including male students, and I struggled to work in groups. I disliked the idea of speaking in front of boys and felt very uncomfortable sitting next to one. It was also a real challenge to cope with seeing male teachers in school, and I was very shy when speaking to the headteacher, who was male. Having such experiences helped strengthen and focus my ethnography as I looked to see if similar patterns emerged amongst ethnic minority children.

During my primary school year in Britain, I was disheartened to feel the same exclusion as I had in Saudi Arabia and more so, especially with the language barrier and school's lack of cultural understanding. Although there are many thousands of Muslim children in UK primary schools, Butt (2007) believes that there is still a lot of uncertainty and ignorance about Islam. Unfortunately, I was a target for bullies in my class and other year groups. According to Hick (1995) bullying has existed for a long time and is in fact one of the most persistent problems in schools today. Due to my own timidity and language challenges, when bullied by children, I was often quite physical using both hands and feet as a means of defending myself and getting the message across. Of course teachers always sanctioned me, but I continued with this method and eventually progressed to shouting in Arabic. It was very exhausting and devastating to

explain my side of the story whenever a problem occurred, and I always sensed my teachers' helplessness. Events in recent years, such as the 9/11 attack and 7/7 bombings (see chapter 3 section 3.4), as argued by Newcombe (2007) have also served to further inflame prejudice against Muslims and thus increased the risk of bullying in school. Hick (1995) believes that it is a reality faced by children in faith schools. In fact, it was a reality that I personally witnessed over the two years of my ethnography in both schools. I was alarmed to see the lack of respect some children had for one another and the bullying which took place due to faith and culture differences (see chapters 6 sections 6.4).

In an attempt to overcome language barriers, I used to inform my parents of the problems faced and they would communicate these to the teacher. It was depressing to witness children verbally or physically bullying other children from ethnic minority backgrounds. In school, teasing and calling names were frequently practiced. I used to hear the phrases 'paki', or 'freshy' and see children teasing girls about wearing the *hijab* and on some occasions actually pulling it off. Similarly, a number of children used to make fun of customs, colour of skin, accents and the food we eat. An example from my research discusses an incident when a Hindu boy was teased and laughed at for eating his dinner with his hand (see section 7.2.2). I used to feel lonely, unhappy and unsafe and very quickly lost confidence. Such experience of my primary schooling in Britain became a fertile instrument to consider and learn from during the course of this research. This included exploring the school's environment, children behaviours and aspects of faith, culture and language, which were all combined to formulate the structure of my thesis.

#### **1.4. My Secondary Education**

Transition from primary to secondary schooling was very difficult. Realising that there were single-sex secondary schools, my parents immediately applied for the closest one to our home. There are many reasons why parents choose certain schools for their children and one of them is: happiness of the individual (Le Grand, 2007). Although parents are concerned about school's academic performances when choosing a school (Gibbons and Silva, 2009), Warner (2010) argues that they are also accompanied by equal and occasionally greater concerns for children's happiness and well-being. Therefore, Gibbons and Silva (2009) assert that through positive emotional experiences at school, children will

result in a lifelong love of learning, which will ensure future academic success. Nonetheless, other reasons for parents' school selection according to Gorard (1999), is influenced by gender and religion. According to Derks and Krabbendam (2012:283) "gender differences in the brain pertain to both structure and function...there is clear evidence from both post mortem studies and structural Magnetic Resonance Imaging studies for a difference in total brain volume between men and women". Therefore, Frea (2008) claims that there are neurological reasons to explain why girls and boys can benefit from single sex teaching as their brains are wired differently. However, neuroscientist Eliot (2010) researched brain differences found minimal evidence existed of the hard-wiring in brains of girls and boys.

Thompson and Ungerleider (2004) have argued that a disadvantage of single sex schools is that many teachers may not have the training to employ gender-specific teaching techniques. Additionally, such schools may cause barriers for students to integrate into "mixed gender" society (*ibid*). However, Kennedy (2009) supports single sex schools as boosting girls' confidence and often having better discipline. Similarly a study was conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) examined the impact of school size and single-sex education on pupil performance from 979 primary and 2,954 secondary schools (Spielhofer *et al.*, 2002). Findings suggested that girls, and to a certain extent boys, can benefit academically from attending single-sex secondary schools (*ibid*). Although not rejecting the idea of mixed schools, I realised that my ability to communicate with other students was somewhat eased by being taught in a single sex school. I managed to express my feelings and comfortably discuss sensitive topics with other girls without being embarrassed or subconscious of boys' presence.

Moreover, parents often cited that a key reason for choosing a girls' school was to further prolong the wholesomeness of childhood (Collins and Snell, 2000). Wilkins (2011) suggested that parents are often anxious that their daughters are growing up too fast, and therefore worried that they are being excessively exposed to negative influences. For some families, perhaps more often Asian families, single-sex provision is important due to religious reasons (Edwards *et al.*, 1989; West and Varlaam, 1991). For more information about parents' school choices, see section 2.4.1. This is true for me and my family as our choice was

influenced by the factor of school gender, which was regarded essential for my faith and culture.

My application to the school was followed by an interview, which must have been the strangest interview for the teacher. At most I spoke two sentences and did a lot of nodding, smiling and looking very polite, while my parents did the rest of the talking and answered all interview questions on my behalf. Although disheartening, it was no surprise to learn that my application had been rejected due to language issues and low SATs levels. However, with great support from our social worker, I reapplied, was successful and joined the cohort of 1996.

This secondary school was also a faith school belonging to the C of E. As with my primary school, we were not aware of the denominational aspect. Soon afterwards, the religious nature of the school became more apparent through displays in classrooms and around the school, daily routine, assemblies and collective worship. Being raised in a religious environment and taught to respect religions, I respected my school's emphasis on Christianity via its assemblies and activities and enjoyed Religious Education (RE) lessons. However, it became daunting to realise that nearly all school activities were Christian based with no recognition for other religions or cultures. For example, it was mandatory to attend all religious assemblies which predominantly focused on the Christian celebrations and themes. The award ceremony at the end of each year also took place in a Cathedral and all students were required to attend. Displays around the school had a Christian theme and decorations and many Christmas trees where only put up for Christmas. RE was also a compulsory subject, taught from year 7 to year 11, and students had to choose RE for the GCSE phase. RE was focused around the Christian faith and I specifically remember having to learn Mark's Gospel for the closed book GCSE examination. The only other time other religions were discussed was during certain terms in RE lessons, through reading text books. Although disappointed by the insignificant contributions, I was still exceptionally excited about the term we studied Islam. Such feelings were also mirrored during my ethnography as children's focus groups expressed an excitement and enthusiasm for learning about their own religion and others too (see chapter 6 section 6.2).

Although in secondary school there was less aggressive behaviour from students, I still felt othered and isolated. Students only sat with others of the

same ethnicity or religion. In my year group, there were only 2 Muslim girls and they preferred not to communicate with me, therefore, I was mostly by myself. Housee (2012) discusses her encounters of issues around racism and anti-racism during her student life and how such events have inspired her interest in antiracism in education. Her political and personal journey has made her the feminist, anti-racist teacher and CRT researcher that she has is now (*ibid*). This very much resonates with my experience and connects with how I approached this research. Moreover, the concept of being othered in CRT, as emphasised by Delgado (1995); and Yosso (2006) (see chapter 4), implies those who are different from the mainstream and being deprived from accessing their rights. The concept is related to the terms of identity and difference and is also associated with marginalised groups who often go unrecognised and unappreciated (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001).

As a result, bullying in secondary school continued to be an issue, and I was ill treated by many girls until year 9. Although the school allowed Muslim girls to wear their headscarf, provided a prayer room during the month of Ramadan, and allowed students to take days off to celebrate Islamic festivals, it lacked resources such as copies of the Qur'an, prayer mats, *halal* food and appropriate washing facilities. Similarly during my research of the two primary schools, this distinctive lack of facilities/resources and schools' approach to it was observed. Both schools appeared to be neglecting the importance of teaching and acknowledging other faiths which resulted in some children feeling excluded and othered (see sections 6.2 and 6.3). In addition, throughout my secondary education, only festivals relating to the school's religious denomination were celebrated, presented in assemblies and highlighted in classroom and school displays. I felt that the only culture pupils learned about at this school was the one related to the school's faith except for the modest information provided in RE lessons about other religions. Wearing a *hijab*, having a different Physical Education (PE) uniform, only eating vegetarian food (for seven years) as no *halal* meat was provided and fasting the month of Ramadan was at most times labelled as extreme and odd. Faith schools promise cohesion and harmony, while according to Smith (2006a) and Crace (2007) in practice, they have created social fraction and exclusion. Hagendoorn (1999) claims that focusing on the values of a particular faith and incorporating particular religious and spiritual elements into the school activities implies separation of children along religious and often ethnic lines, thereby fuelling divisions in wider society. These

negative memories inspired me to think seriously about the causes of bullying and whether such negative behaviour still exists in schools.

Although I was blessed to have been accepted in a girl's school, which eliminated worries of mixing with male students, I faced numerous challenges with the lack of language resources. The school later provided me with English as an Additional Language (EAL) assistant who accompanied me to various lessons and helped to explain the work. Unfortunately, she only spoke English and French, which made our interaction somewhat difficult, but interesting. It was extremely depressing to always be needing support and relying on my family for help with homework. I became disheartened on realising that I had obtained low results in every exam and placed in bottom sets for all subjects. It was the opposite in Saudi Arabia, where I was achieving 100% and was an exceptional student. This motivated me to strive harder, rise to the challenge and improve my English language proficiency. Eventually, I was able to tackle the GCSE phase and obtain 12 GCSEs A\*-C. I also completed an Arabic GCSE and A-Level in one year during my GCSE finals. Considering all the challenges I faced to learn English, I decided to study English Literature for my A-levels, alongside Chemistry, Biology and Health and Social Care. It was during this time that I decided to pursue a teaching career.

The secondary phase of my education combined with my primary education in faith schools gave me an important insight into and experience of faith-based education. The school's culture including subjects taught, children behaviours, facilities, and resources within the school have motivated my enquiry as to whether faith in schools does create understanding, harmony, tolerance and integration. In this respect one can pose the question of why girls wearing a *hijab* become a target for bullying, and does faith, as suggested by Gibbons and Silva (2006) and Jepsen (2003) create a peaceful and harmonious environment inside the school? Such issues became interesting issues to explore in this research.

### **1.5. Higher Education**

During the course of the PhD, I got married in the second year and lived with my husband in a rented house. Then I had my first child, Muna in the third year of my PhD (2009), and Mohammed in 2012. Nevertheless, I encountered a number

of racially motivated problems. In my neighbourhood, the whole family suffered aggravations for two years from local children due to our religion, ethnicity and physical appearance. We had many incidents where children would use verbally abusive language, throw bricks at our cars/windows, slash the tires with knives and smash our house windows. Incidents were always reported to the police who opened a Hate Crime Case and later provided us with two CCTV cameras to install outside the house. Unfortunately those interventions did not help to improve our lives as incidents were occurring regularly and although some were caught on camera, it was too poor quality and unclear footage of the perpetrators for anything to be done. Due to racism, absence of respect and lack of faith/cultural awareness, the whole family suffered a number of physical, emotional and financial problems. My husband took time off work to be in the house in case of any incidents and the days which he went to work, my father or brothers would stay with me. Though some neighbours appeared very friendly and concerned, during times when we needed their help they turned away and offered no support. It was later decided that for the safety of the whole family, the police would intervene in finding us a new house in an area we “best fit in”. Although very difficult, time consuming and costly we relocated to an area which is highly populated by Muslims, therefore, ‘fitting’ in very well and eliminating further racial problems.

Such challenges and distractions added extra pressure on my research and the timescale; however, it was an eye-opener. The above experiences made me appreciate and value the importance of RE and teaching children, from an early age, about various faiths and cultures. At the same time, I started to question existing faith schools and whether they are truly working towards developing tolerance and cultural understanding. In spite of the rhetoric of equal opportunities in education and health care, and the rights for ethnic minority communities, the notion of faith schools and concept of community cohesion (see sections 3.3 and 3.5) have started to challenge my perspective of the future of cultural diversity in England. When I started to explore some possible explanations, I realised that there was a huge cultural clash and religious phobia, which is indeed rooted in the collective understanding of the community. Having said that, it would be too simplistic to solely blame faith schools for overlooking the significance of other faith teaching. Places of worship such as Churches, Mosques, Synagogues and Temples also need to work with the

community and schools to stimulate a sense of responsibility for the sustained development of a less segregated society.

In choosing a teaching career which was deeply impacted upon by experience, I was determined to make a difference in primary schools, especially to EAL and ethnic minority children. Monaghan (2004) argued that EAL learners not only have to learn to talk in English but to learn through English. As such, this dual task provides both challenges and opportunities. However, concerns regarding the relative performance of EAL pupils and how schools must meet the needs of those ethnic minority pupils were reported by Modood *et al.* (1997). One reason for the lack of research into EAL achievement, according to Cameron (2002), has been the lack of public discussion about levels of language proficiency, due to possible racist or discriminatory overtones. Through government's publication of 'Aiming High', the strategy for raising the attainment of ethnic minority pupils was through identifying the need to establish a common national approach for teaching and assessing bilingual learners (DfES, 2003). However, OfSTED (2005) confirmed that analysis of key stage 1 and 2 data revealed that pupils with English as their first language consistently attain higher levels in English than pupils with EAL. During my teaching practices, I was able to relate to many of the EAL children and have an idea of what they were feeling and thinking. I felt confident when providing or suggesting resources and methods to use in supporting EAL children. I suppose this latter experience coupled with my entire school career drove me to passionately accept the PhD opportunity. Researching this topic helped me see how children from various faith groups see themselves in a school culture and how they are viewed by others. Additionally, it helped in exploring if faith elements were apparent in both faith and non-faith schools, and how it impacted on children. Being a Muslim and dressing differently to others made me feel like a "stranger" amongst other children during the primary phase and even at Higher Education. Astonishingly, even at university stage, I was destined to be the only Muslim student on the course and never came across other Muslim girls on campus.

Ironically, I am now completing a PhD which for me explains beautifully the feeling of isolation as I am writing and researching alone. According to Silverman (2005), doctoral research is different from the shared experience of doing an undergraduate or a master's degree, therefore, Cowan (1997:184) referred to a PhD research as "a lonely business". Bell (2010) also emphasised



that PhDs are usually described as isolated and lonely. How strange it is that I felt lonely and isolated throughout the duration of my education starting from the primary phase up until my PhD. Although one state is quite common and accepted (the former), the other was somewhat forced upon me due to appearance, beliefs and language challenges.

## **1.6. The Context of the Research**

As discussed earlier, an interest in this topic surfaced not only from my experience but also from political issues revolving around faith school in that period. In addition, an exhaustive literature review (e.g. Le Grand, 1991; Schagen *et al.*, 2002) and analysing various researches (e.g. Hanushek, 2003; Prais, 2005; Gibbons and Silva, 2006) has further enhanced the context of the research. When Tony Blair's 'New Labour' party swept to power in 1997, faith was on its education agenda (see section 2.4). Jones (2003) and Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005) pointed out that the government was concerned about its system which provided funding for C of E and RC schools but hardly any for other religions, therefore, encouraged other religions to apply for funding. Having thus demonstrated its commitment to a range of faith groups, Garrod (2003) argued that the former New Labour then announced that it wanted to expand the number of Church of England secondary schools. In 2001 the government announced its intention to expand faith schools in both primary and secondary schools (DfES, 2001),

However, 2001 was not a good year to promote religious involvement in education as it not only included the inter-ethnic disturbances which broke out in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham, but also due to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre (USA) and the war in Afghanistan (see chapter 3). In the UK it was realised that a few months prior to the riots, two reports (by Raminder Singh who was a former deputy chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality and Graham Mahony who was a former race relations chief), were commissioned by Bradford Council. They emphasised that communities were becoming isolated along racial, cultural and religious lines, and that segregated schools were fuelling the divisions (Harris, 2001b). However, both reports were unpublished and according to Gillard (2007) those reports were prophetic as riots spread to various cities (see chapter 3). Nonetheless, these issues were coinciding with

New Labour's intension to increase faith schools in 2001 and encouraging religious groups to work with failing schools (see section 2.4).

Additionally, it appeared that issues of racism and segregation were only increasing as research at Bristol University led by Professor Simon Burgess suggested that concerns from the Bradford riots were ignored (Burgess *et al.*, 2004). It is believed that faith schools, pushed for by the former New Labour government, were becoming mono-cultural zones, which were potential breeding grounds for intolerance and racism (*ibid*). A year later, the UK witnessed a series of coordinated suicide attacks took place at the centre of London on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 (see chapter 3 section 3.4). Four British Muslim men were said to have been involved in the attacks (House of Commons, 2006), which according to Modood (2005) and Gokulsing (2006) raised questions about multiculturalism and further fuelled the concept of faith schools. Gillard (2007) argues that during the ten years of Blair's office, he demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to faith-based education, no doubt prompted, by his own religious convictions. It is true perhaps that Blair welcomed faith schools because they appeared to offer good education, however, from the above it seems that the debate regarding the impact of faith schools on education is far more complex.

Therefore, it was realised that the ways in which faith is manifested in two primary schools (within the North West), needed to be thoroughly explored. For example, Evans and Schwab (1995:972) recognised that "if Catholic schools are more effective than public schools, we need to know more about the source of their effectiveness". Gokulsing (2006) brought to light that there has been comparatively little research on what faith schools do and deliver. Similarly, literature (e.g. Hanushek, 2003; Gibbons and Silva, 2006) reveals that there is still an ongoing debate about the significance of faith in primary schooling. Those who have defended faith schools in the UK (e.g. De Jong and Snik, 2002; Short, 2003) claim that such schools derive both academic and social benefit from their distinctive aims and ethos, while those against faith schools (e.g. Marples, 2005; Crace, 2006) claim that such schools are both socially divisive and prejudicial towards their pupils. As a result, questions have been posed with regards to faith schools' admission policy and having a more restricted intake than other schools as well as faith being associated with better performance and greater community solidarity. However, researchers in education (e.g. Le Grand,

1991; Gibbons and Silva, 2006) have questioned whether or not pupils really benefit from attending faith schools, or whether faith schools simply attract families of religious backgrounds.

According to Munn (2008), a school ethos reflects the beliefs of the school, encompasses a set of values that it aims to promote across its curriculum and sets the climate and outlook of the school (see chapter 3 section 3.6). As such, an ethos is significant in making a school unique. Equally, Smith (1998) highlights that the ethos in individual classrooms should reflect the ethos in the school as a whole and have an impact on it. Arguably, it is teachers' responsibility to understand and promote the school ethos and to help their pupils do the same (*ibid*). One of the schools included in this research is a community school with an Islamic ethos; therefore, it was vital to explore the importance of the ethos on the school and how its religious nature manifested itself within the school culture and classrooms. In addition, it was interesting to make comparisons between this school and the C of E School (see chapter 6 section 6.5).

Moreover, one could pose the question relating to cultural diversity in schools and if faith serves as a tool for developing cultural awareness or as a means of creating confusion and segregation as was raised by Harris (2001b) and Burgess *et al.* (2004) during the riots and 7/7 attacks. Due to concerns of racial tensions, the Cattle Report (2001) was published focusing on community cohesion (see chapter 3). The Cattle Report (2001) emphasised the ignorance which communities had of each other, thus signified the importance of fostering integration and teaching children about the diverse cultures. Gardner *et al.* (2005) point out that the notion of school culture is certainly not new, but undoubtedly remains a troubled concept. School culture, according to Chen and Lan (1998), is seen as influencing school beliefs about the value of education, and how academic expectations are communicated and perceived. If adequately understood, school culture (see chapter 3) can enrich our understanding of education and schooling, as it includes the obvious elements of schedules, curriculum, demographics and policies, as well as social interactions (Dean, 2001).

Subsequently, being a female researcher, I have encountered a number of challenges in the initial pilot concerning social interaction (see chapter 5 section

5.5). Wearing the *hijab* has had a negative impact on the number of participants as parents, whom hesitated to participate or allow their children to take part. Misunderstanding of culture aspects can create barriers and a distorted image about people. This has led to a claim by Al-Qaradawi (2002) who states that the *hijab* is being continuously used as tool to justify that Muslim women are being oppressed and is thus a violation of women's liberty. Moreover, Tohidi (1998) highlighted that viewing Muslim women in this way is not only against the ideology of feminism which operates on equal values and principles but in some ways created a sort of hindrance during the processes of conducting the research (see chapter 4 section 4.4). Although much of feminist literature is from a white, Western perspective, with some reservation about their views, I agree with concepts relating to women having rights and opportunities of involvement in life and social affairs, as long as it follows the Islamic framework. Depriving women from integrating in the community and being viewed as inferior is against human rights. Therefore, due to such attitude and the initial pilot study experience, a change of research focus and methodology took place. It is important to note that during the initial phase of the research and the pilot study, I was unaware of the links to feminist theory. Due to my cultural background as explained above, it was challenging to see how feminist theory was and still is an essential component to this research. However, after various discussions with my supervisor, it was brought to my attention the importance of feminist theory and I was encouraged to engage in it.

Additionally reviewing literature has shown that many schools often perceive children from different backgrounds 'differently'. Studies in the UK (e.g. Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Gillborn, 2008) indicate the occurrence of racism in schools, mainly in terms of teachers' unintentional attitudes, behaviours and practices. In particular, it has been found that teachers treat Black, Muslim and Asian students in stereotypic or hostile ways and assume that these students have behaviour problems (e.g. Connolly, 1998; Archer, 2003). Also according to Archer and Francis (2005) teachers' practices were found to be racist and grounded in gendered and ethnic assumptions. In particular, it has been found that teachers tend to unintentionally disregard children from different backgrounds (see Donnelly, 2004). Chapter 6 highlights various examples of teachers running direct/indirect racist practices in their classrooms either without realising it or meaning to.

Additionally, findings from a research by Archer and Francis (2005) explored Chinese pupils' experiences within British and American schools. Although Chinese pupils are high achievers which led to labelling this ethnic minority group as a "success story", it does underestimate their diverse experiences and serves as a means of masking the inequalities facing these pupils (Archer and Francis 2005). Hadjithemistos *et al.* (2006) asserted that Chinese pupils are constantly confronted with racism, either verbal abuse or racially motivated attacks, and discrimination in British and American schools. Such incidents are relatively an everyday phenomenon and certainly not extraordinary (Archer and Francis, 2005; Mau, 2014). Additionally outcomes of a research by Phoenix (2002) reflected racism in the lives of children of mixed parentage. However, it is surprising that there is little evidence on impact of faith on pupils' lives, as well as on the school.

### **1.7. Defining the Research Question**

This research starts from the assumptions that: firstly there is, in fact, a close relationship between faith and schooling, as well as school culture, and that they both work together to enhance pupils' tolerance and understanding. Secondly, that fostering religious commitment and taking into consideration children's cultural diversity, would reduce tension, acts of racism and discriminations. As such, it then becomes appropriate to address the issue of the ways in which faith is manifested in school. Therefore, the main research questions are as follows:

1. How is faith manifested in primary schools?
2. What influence does faith have on school culture and ethos?
3. What impact does faith have on pupils' behaviours in school?

Regarding the first question, it is concerned with the ways in which faith is apparent in schools' policies, classrooms and displays. The issue of faith in schools has been one of the most debated questions at the interface of religion and education in the UK (Jackson, 2003). The term 'faith schools' in the context of the debate is generally (but not always) used to refer to 'schools with a religious character' (to use the official wording) that are maintained by state funding (Gardner *et al.*, 2005). In this context, I consider the reality of how faith

is manifested in both the C of E School and the Community School with an Islamic ethos.

In relation to the second question, the main concern is to explore whether and to what extent, faith has an influence on school culture and ethos. According to Cush (2005), this is considered a significant issue compared to other debates. It provides a case study leading into the fundamental question about the aims and purpose of faith and a religious ethos in schools. For example a Muslim child, due to cultural differences, would require a separate room or a place for offering prayers. Similarly some children would require specific days off school for celebrating their festivals. The question raised is whether faith schools or schools with a religious ethos have an impact on such cultural diversity of children. There is also a debate regarding the ethos of the school and whether it would be evident in the school environment, such as lessons, assemblies and interactions between staff members and children.

This has led to the third question which considers the impact of faith on pupils' behaviour in school. Halstead and McLaughlin (2005) argue that faith schools cannot be said to be divisive because there is no empirical evidence to suggest that children's experience in faith schools makes them less sympathetic to other cultures. Therefore, observing the school environment assisted in exploring the impact faith had on children's behaviour and understanding. Also as Lipsett (2008:1) emphasised that "One in four children are bullied because of their faith", this research question helped to clarify if and why cases of bullying occurred.

### **1.8. Aims of the Research**

This research explores the ways in which faith is manifested in schools. It highlights problem areas and suggests ways of improving faith elements in schools. Therefore, this research aims to:

1. Review the literature thoroughly in terms of the overarching theoretical approach, including the signposting of key philosophical perspectives which enhance the perspective and understanding of faith and religious culture within schools.
2. Explore the multiple ways in which faith is manifested in two schools within the North West of England.

3. Determine the complex influence of faith on school culture and ethos.
4. Establish the impact of faith on pupils' behaviours and understanding in school.
5. Outline recommendations and suggestions for future research.

## **1.9. Definition of Key Terms in this Research**

It is conventional for this research to provide definitions of the key terms that are used throughout this research specifically 'school', 'ethos', 'school culture', 'religion', 'faith', 'race', 'racism' and 'ethnicity' to confirm their relevance, usefulness and significance in relation to data analysis and findings. The choice of definitions for such central terms and concepts is extremely important in any research. In this section these core terms and concepts are introduced below and elaborated on with deeper reflections as appropriate in forthcoming chapters.

### **1.9.1. School**

A school is a place where teaching and learning occurs, steadily and systematically. Schools are generally designed for teaching students (or pupils) under the direction of teachers. Generally schools in the England are divided into primary – for young children and secondary – for eleven years old and older, who have completed primary education. For the purpose of this research, the word 'school' corresponds with the views of Rudduck and Flutter (2004), who highlight that schools include; classrooms, assembly hall and dining hall, playground, gym, and/or changing rooms for PE lessons, library and ICT suites. Moreover, schools include, staff rooms, offices and first-aid rooms. The word school also refers to location of the building, administration and other policies and the make-up of school staff and children.

### **1.9.2. Ethos**

Ethos is a term often employed by educationists to describe the distinctive range of values and beliefs, which define the philosophy or atmosphere of an organisation. According to Acker (1999) ethos is defined as the framework of aims, principles and expectations that a school sets out, both explicitly and implicitly, to support the process of enabling learning in an ordered, safe and

secure environment. The DfE (2010:39) stated that the school ethos “....is reflected in the way pupils relate to each other, how pupils relate to staff, and how the school relates to the community it serves”. This is an important and significant element of ethos because it alerts us to the formal objectives of the school and most importantly provides us with an important insight into the lived reality of the school (see chapter 3 section 3.6.). Good practice suggests that the ethos of a school will have been developed from a consensus, led by the headteacher and governing body, involving detailed discussions with school staff, parents, pupils and often with outside agencies. As a result, schools’ ethos – how it is organised and run - offers important data about the nature of the two schools. Schools’ ethos is discussed in this research to refer to the learning environment, discipline, fairness and tolerance in stressing more strongly aspects of respecting religions, faiths and cultures.

### **1.9.3. School Culture**

Yosso (2005) affirms that culture is an extremely complex concept. It is defined in many different ways, for example; McCarthy and Carter (1994:150) define culture as “the set of values and beliefs which are prevalent within a given society or section of a society”. Jenks (2005) asserts that culture is a life style, an existence programme and an action a person adopts for himself, whereas Ember and Ember (1998) define culture as the total beliefs and practises of a society. In her research, Acker (1990) describes the culture of a primary school as having a family feel due to their closeness. According to Met and Byram (1999) awareness of cultural diversity is an essential requirement for improving education standards and creating a nurturing school atmosphere. It seems safe, therefore, to assert that the relation between education and culture is a necessary consideration in any fruitful teaching and learning process. Although the term culture is understood to include vast topics ranging from art and literature to issues of beliefs, family life, customs, attitudes and social habits, in the context of this research, the phrase ‘school culture’ focuses on school ethos, values, lessons, activities, school clubs, assemblies and meetings.

### **1.9.4. Religion**

The discussion of religion and its promotion in schools has been an ongoing debate regarding its significance on schooling as a tool to promote social



cohesion, community well-being, reduce tensions and integrate children. Although there is no agreement as to the definition of religion in its most general sense and is challenging because it is subject to a range of connotations, interpretations, understandings and definitions (Abdul-Rahman, 2007), the Oxford Dictionary's definition of religion (Soanes, 2001) consists of the belief in a God or gods and the activities that are concerned with this belief such as prayer or worship in a Church or Temples. According to Cush (2013:64) religions are "diverse and the dividing lines between them are not clear" and the term for many people has negative connotations. Al-Asqalani (1994) suggests that the term religion is defined as an organised system of belief, practices and rituals of a community designed to bring a human close to God or to a higher power and to promote an understanding of a person's relationship to others living together in a community. Religion is also considered as a system of belief and worship of god(s), or any such system of belief and worship, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs (Johnson, 2004; Abdul-Rahman, 2007). This implies that religion should not discriminate against mankind; who may have different coloured skin and belong to different tribes, as they all belong to the human race. In this respect, Abbas (2005) points out that religion is essential as it brings social coherence and rules, regardless of differences. Therefore having a positive impact on the life of individuals and the society as a whole. In this research when using the term religion, it is referring to religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism etc. and includes belief, ethics, moral codes and values.

#### **1.9.5. Faith**

Developing a definition for faith has proven mysterious (Philips, 1990) and one definition may not fit all. Nevertheless, a preliminary effort to develop a definition can start from dictionaries which according to the Oxford Dictionary (Soanes, 2001), faith is defined as a system of religious belief in a particular God. Whereas the Bible Dictionary (Easton, 2009) and Dictionary of Islamic Terms (Al-Khudrawi, 2004), defined faith as: trust, strong belief, unquestioning confidence, loyalty, sincerity and honesty. Similarly, Ja'far al-Sheikh (1984) highlights that faith is traditionally defined as devotion, and direction of one's self, and is often charged with emotion, conviction, or trust. According to Philips (1990) faith as used in the Bible simply refers to the things people believe due to

indirect evidence, whereas in the Torah, faith refers to the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. In Islam there are more than seventy three branches of faith: the highest is believing in God and the lowest is removing obstacles from the road (Al-Qaradawi, 2002). In the context of this research, faith is used to mean the practical side of religion which includes religious services, collective worship, religious involvements, celebrations, festivals, prayers, rituals and meditation.

#### **1.9.6. Race**

The notion of race is nearly as problematic from a cultural point of view as it is from a social one and it has no scientific meaning. Social and cultural definitions of race not only vary but they also change across time. Alexander (2002) argues that race is defined in terms of social distinctions made between groups of people in various societies which create great significance for understanding racial prejudice and discrimination. Walters (2012) affirms that that race does have an impact on children's achievements and experiences of education. Race thus evolved as a worldview, a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behaviour. However, Jonathan (2011) argues that the "racial" worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power, and wealth.

Walters (2012) suggested that 'race' is a physical difference, thus scrutinises the term as the identity of association with a certain group can be manifested in the form of discrimination. Reviewing literature on the concept of race (e.g. Philippe, 1997; Earl, 2010; Jonathan, 2011) proposes various systems of racial classifications based on observable characteristics, such as; skin, colour, hair type, body proportions, and religious backgrounds. This essentially highlights the perceived differences among broad geographic populations of humans and in some cases they may well be considered offensive. Race considered in this research encompasses people's physical characteristics as explained above as well as religion, ethnicity, nationality and language, which are different to others. The research explores behaviours which may be related to or were a direct cause of race. This concept of race is further useful when observing the school culture, staff and children and the school environment in general.

### **1.9.7. Racism**

According to Gillborn, (2008) racism is complex and constantly changing. However, Jones (1999) affirmed that it is part of a mainstream society. It implies processes and acts which disadvantage or discriminate against people because of their skin colour, ethnicity, religion, nationality or language (Lane, 2008). Whereas Bobo and Fox (2003) identify racism with a belief in racial superiority. Such definition, however, is not necessarily the case as race-haters who do not rationalise their hatred with ranking beliefs are nevertheless racists (Bell, 2004). Racism as suggested by Osler and Morrison (2000) is the overarching societal paradigm that tolerates, accepts, and reinforces racial inequalities, and is associated with racially unequal opportunities for children to learn and thrive. Thus, racial inequalities result in the discriminatory treatment of people of minority status (*ibid*). Bradbury (2014) believes that discussion of racism in schools has moved from individual acts of racism to acts which unintentionally discriminates children from ethnic minority communities. Concerns were raised of discrimination being visible in schools on racial ground, especially as teachers' attitudes, education policy and classroom practices have worked to create and maintain disparities in educational attainment (*ibid*). Racism occurs when the policies and practices of an organisation unfairly discriminate against people from ethnic minority backgrounds (Gillborn, 2008). Therefore, a racist incident signifies any incident that is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person (Teachernet, 2006).

### **1.9.8. Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is a social construction which changes depending on time and circumstance. The terms race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably (Lane, 2008). When discussing ethnicity, issues of social class and poverty are usually connected. According to Kenway and Palmer (2007) figures show that around two-fifths of people from ethnic minorities live in low-income households, twice the rate for White people. Also almost half of all children from ethnic minorities live in low-income households compared to a quarter of White British children (*ibid*). Examination of the relationship between ethnicity, poverty and place has tended to focus on the distribution of ethnic minority groups. However, Garner and Bhattacharyya (2011) reject the analysis that poverty in certain distribution is due to the presence of ethnic identity or culture.

According to Walters (2012:28) research on ethnicity, race and education “it would seem that the education system serves certain ethnic groups better than others”. Belonging to a certain group had an influence on children’s achievements in school and as far back as the 1970s in the UK for example, “ethnic minority children were underachieving” (Walters, 2012:31). When people are collecting data on ethnicity, they use a mixture of markers: physical e.g. black, cultural e.g. traveller, religious e.g. Muslim and geographical e.g. Asian, to differentiate between groups (Pilkington, 2003). In this research ethnicity and ethnic minority are used to refer to children/adults whose appearance, nationality and cultures are different.

### **1.10. Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis composes eight chapters. Chapter 1 presents my semi-autobiography with references to literature and research and provides the contextual framework for the research. Chapter 2 focuses on and explores a historical perspective of faith-based education in England with a critical examination of the economic, social and political factors affecting the education system. Chapter 3 reviews the concept of culture and its relation on education. It also focuses of the issues of multiculturalism, community cohesion and Islamophobia. The importance of a school ethos and how it operates within schools are also explored. Chapter 4 is primarily concerned with the theoretical framework of this research, therefore, reviewing CRT and Feminist Theory. The research design and information relating to initial pilot and ethnography are detailed in chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings and discussions of two major themes and various sub-themes. The conclusion and recommendations from the ethnography are presented in chapter 8. It also identifies suggestions for future research in this field.

### **1.11. Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter, I have presented a semi-autobiographical account of myself and the ways it links and connects with the research. Research questions and aims have also been outlined. Although faith-based education seems to be appreciated for its presumably core values and good behaviour (Short, 2003), its contributions to religious tensions have been questioned (Crace, 2006). As a result, there is an urgency for more specialised and more explicit research to be

conducted to examine the issue of faith schools. Therefore, to explore the impact of faith, this research uses two primary schools in the North West of England, one of which is a Church of England and the other is a community school with an Islamic ethos. I examine the influence of faith on school culture and on the impact it has on pupils' behaviour and understanding in school. The next chapter explores the historical perspectives of faith schools and its impact on education.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Historical Perspective of Faith Schools**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents and explores various factors, in order to review a historical perspective of faith-based education in England and the history leading up to the present situation. With this in mind, the chapter starts by reviewing educational aspects from the medieval period until present. The economic, social and political climates directly related to the English education system are critically examined. This provides a context to understand the fundamental shift of these issues in educational policy. This research was undertaken when the former New Labour party was in government and the literature review includes issues raised in that period. It is necessary however, to explore issues raised during this current Coalition government with regards to relevant updates to faith schools.

#### **2.2. Education in Early nineteenth century**

Educational provision in England was established on denominational lines dating back to the middle Ages, and till now faith-based groups have continued to perpetuate this tradition. The role of religion in the early development of schools is unquestionable, with the two main Church providers of schools being the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. Those of a Christian tradition, particularly Church of England, have existed since the nineteenth century, with the aim of establishing a universal access to education (Green, 1990). Until about 1880, Simon (1965) indicates that virtually all education in England was provided by the Church of England. Since the Church had a long tradition in managing schools, it was to be expected that they would continue to see schools as agencies for the religious education (Bates, 1994).

Education in those Churches was largely confined to ministers (authorised to perform functions such as teaching of beliefs) in order to carve out their evangelical crusade (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005). Small, informal schools in the parish Church, chapel, and monasteries were operated. The curriculum was

directed at learning Latin, the old Roman language used by the Church in its ceremonies and teachings. It could be argued that the Church of England intended to use this opportunity to disseminate its religious messages, cultural norms and community responsibilities. Gillard (2011) pointed out that the conscious object of these early schools, linked to cathedrals and monasteries, was to train intending priests to conduct and understand Church services, as well as reading the Bible and writings of Christian Fathers. Sunday schools were established to teach the poor, both children and adults, how to read the Bible. It seemed that the primary concern of the Church was to focus solely on teaching the Ten Commandments, Bible stories and other religious related issues, which were seen essential for that period (Simon, 1992). According to McKinney (2006) such Church schools were originally established for religious and educational purposes for children, at a time when religious practice was more prevalent. Therefore, when the state proposed to run the educational system, it was seen by the Church of England as a threat, which illustrated a strong libertarian prejudice (David, 1980). This as suggested by Gillard (2011), seemed to ally with the self-interest of the Churches in maintaining their own control of education. The Church's rejection of state involved education indicates its ideal government would protect the rights of its citizens and not hinder freedom of thought and action (Simon, 1992). Hence it could perhaps appear as a challenge to liberalised parents to send their children to work (Gillard, 2011).

### **2.3. Challenges and Changes of Education**

This section discusses the changes that occurred in the education system, which are presented as follows:

#### **2.3.1. Social, Political and Economic Transformation**

In the nineteenth century during the expansion of the British Empire, availability of money, coal and iron, and the invention of the steam engine, all combined to facilitate the construction of factories for the mass production of goods. The factory system increased the specialisation of labour, resulting in large numbers of people moving to new industrial cities, especially in the Midlands and the North, (Benn and Chitty, 1996). But people were also going into factories due to economic necessity as they were driven off the land by the Parliamentary Enclosure Movement in Scotland (Trevelyan, 1972). Alongside the upheaval of

industrialisation, democratisation and the People Act 1832 (commonly known as the Parliamentary Reform Act) were introduced, providing some people with the right to vote for those who owned properties. In addition, the industrial revolution, which was the transition to the new manufacturing processes, beginning from about 1760 to sometime between 1820 and 1840, occurred for a number of reasons, including; population movements in the UK and thus people were driven off the land and into factories (Allen, 2009). Also there was a population expansion due to an increase in birth rates and a decrease in death rates. Similarly, Davies (1996) stated that the economic structure began to change and there was an increase in technological developments. According to Ashton (1968) the sugar and slave trade also contributed to the industrial revolution as it provided a huge amount of capital. Moreover, to consider international elements which resulted in particular changes, Hammond and Hammond (1930) emphasised that during the time of the Chartist movement (1838 – 1848) England was the workshop of the world, with its first factory system and first trains, leaving other countries behind.

However, England did not have a national education system in place (Charlton, 1997). Therefore, it became apparent that there was an urgent need for workers who had more than just basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic, such as agricultural techniques and vocational training. The above mentioned dramatic social, political and economic transformation served to reveal the total inadequacy of educational provision in England. This revolution spurred the state into providing a national education system, as industry required much more than limited reading skills (Benn and Chitty, 1996). One could argue that knowledge and skills taught by the Church were insufficient to prepare future children for social and economy advances. However as the education system was believed to be too expensive to implement for all children and there were concerns about it distracting people from manual work and make them dissatisfied with their social situation (Benn and Chitty, 1996). Therefore, the scheme was provided according to social class whereby only privilege children gained a better education and the poor were still doing reading and writing (Charlton, 1997).

According to Gillard (2011) calls were made for more and better schools. Industrial schools were set up to provide the labours with manual training and elementary instruction as well as reading, writing, geography and religion.



Several mechanics' institutes opened in the mid-1820s and by 1850 there were 610 such institutes in England providing technical education (Simon, 1992). In 1856, the Education Department was moved into the Department of Science and Art, and in 1859 it began setting examinations - for both teachers and students - in branches of science related to industrial occupations. Moreover, education without RE was considered incomplete as schools were founded by Churches and were expected to provide Religious Education (Chitty, 2004).

By 1870 Britain was a largely industrial rather than an agricultural society; in fact Shaw (2011) argued that it was the most industrialised and the most powerful country in the world. The politics of the country was dominated by two parties the Conservatives and the Liberals. However the industrial revolution had created severe social problems which were to be found especially in the area of education and health care. Compulsory schooling was introduced, partly to provide the labour force with the basic skills and routines necessary in an industrial society and also to attempt to prevent civil unrest, which people feared as a very real possibility (*ibid*). Until 1870, the development of a national system of education was left entirely to the voluntary initiative, with the Churches as main providers. When the Church of England's National Society was formed in 1811, Simon (1998) affirms that educational opportunity for the majority of the population was strictly limited. Existing schools were for the wealthy (public schools) or for the poor on a charitable and local basis. However, due to the rapid increase of population which reached 26 million by 1870 (*ibid*), and due to failings of the voluntary system and the advances and changes in political, social and economy aspects as emphasised above, the Liberal party was considering the idea of involving the state in education.

There were concerns from the nonconformist Churches and the Church of England. Nonconformist is the name given to Protestants who are not members of the Church of England. This included Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists, Quakers, Baptists, Unitarians, Congregationalists, and members of the Salvation Army (Gillard, 2001). Politically, the nonconformist Church was linked closely to the Liberal party and its rise to power in parliament under Gladstone's leadership (Johnson, 2011). Despite Gladstone's high Church convictions, his respect for nonconformist religious integrity attracted significant nonconformist loyalty (*ibid*). However, Simon (1992) stated that when the Liberal party supported the drive for a national system, nonconformist Churches were

torn in two ways: between their views that the state should not be involved in education and the failings of a voluntary system in one hand, and between their fear of Anglicans taking control on the other. Similarly, the Church of England worried that the Elementary Education Act of 1870 would replace their responsibility for education (Johnson, 2011). Church leaders affirmed that the parish should be accountable for education, believing that this would reduce crime (Gillard, 2001). This was, however, considered to be too expensive to execute as it was believed that an introduction of such a system would discourage people from manual work and their social circumstances.

The Elementary Education Act of 1870, which was drafted by the Liberal MP William Forster, was implemented. With this Act England witnessed the real birth of the modern system of education in England (Simon, 1992). It made provision for educating all children aged 5 to 13 and established school boards to oversee and complete the network of schools and to bring them all under some form of supervision. According to Johnson, (2011) and Gillard (2011) this Act was seen as a compromise as it attempted to resolve issues between the state, the Church of England and the nonconformist Church. The Act not only gave rise to a national system of state education but also assured the existence of a dual system - voluntary denominational schools and non-denominational state schools. However, many nonconformists regarded the Liberal government's decision to pass this Act, with its support for denominational schools, as a betrayal (Johnson, 2011). The 1870 Elementary Education Act helped to fill the gaps in the patchy education system and laid the foundations for state provision concerned itself primarily with complementing rather than replacing or duplicating the existing Church education system. As successive governments began to take increasing responsibility for education, Church of England schools remained, along with those run by the Roman Catholics and, occasionally, the nonconformist Churches. The churches continued contributions to school maintenance in order to retain control over staffing and the religious education curriculum. The 1870 Act, however, did not make RE compulsory (Shaw, 2011).

Initially, children from poor families were treated as adults as labour was expected of them. However, the introduction of complex machinery due to an enhancement in technology resulted in a great dismissal of child workers. As a result, the government was forced to implement strategies to occupy children and prevent social unrest. Thus a decision of institutionalising children came

forth, whereby more schools were opened receiving funding from the state (David, 1980). Education funded by the state was differentiated by social class, with working class children restricted to elementary education, and middle/higher classes receiving broader education including secondary and higher provision (McCulloch, 1994). One could argue that the government's main motive for education was not to solely benefit the children; rather it was an underhand means of social control and dominance. Moreover, the 1870 Act was designed to make good the gaps in the Church system by providing Board schools where Church schools did not already exist. A considerable number of new state and boarding schools were established among the middle class, who according to Gillard (2011) welcomed the social and moral training which they offered. Additionally, school subjects also formed part of the change. They were expanded to meet the required industry, for example; geography, algebra, geometry and English history. German, ancient history and modern European history were also taught. However, according to Simon (1965) for most children, schools only taught the basic 4 Rs (Religion, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic).

### **2.3.2. Churches' Involvement in State Provision**

The Church and state relationship has been instrumental in the historical development of public education in England. In the nineteenth century, Parliament made grants to financially assist schools in construction and enlargement or repair of school buildings. In 1811, Churches involved in education (Church of England) regarded education for all children as desirable (David, 1980). However, Simon (1992) suggested that influential taxpayers and those who benefited from employing children were less enthusiastic. Other Christians, along with liberal Anglicans, some Roman Catholics and Jews, preferred a less denominational approach (Simon, 1965). The inclusion of religion, alongside the other three (reading, writing and arithmetic), was simply assumed as a right (Gates, 2005).

Simon (1992) argued that the idea of secular education was highly popular in the nineteenth century as it was evident that single faith-based groups were inadequate at voluntarily establishing schools. At that time, debates were presented for both an expansion of Church schools – the Church of England, Roman Catholics and Jewish groups, and the creation of a wholly secular education system presented by liberals in the parliament (Ball, 1990). Churches

were unable to make universal provision, leaving the state responsible for funding schools managed by locally elected school boards (Smith, 1931). In 1833, the government began giving annual grants towards school provision and Simon (1998) and Gillard (2001) pointed out that from 1846 similar grants were given to nonconformist Church. Therefore, the Elementary Education Act of 1870 was introduced and regarded as a compromise (Phillips and Furlong, 2001). It was viewed as the historic legislative benchmark for elementary schooling in England, which laid the foundations for state provision and made primary education compulsory for all children between ages 5 to 13.

It was assumed that the 1870 Act would gradually result in board schools replacing the decline in Church schools (Simon, 1992). The Church of England still felt its position and authority was threatened within the Education Act. Gates (2005) and Cush (2005) suggested that Church leaders felt that the state would use education as a means of imposing their own political agendas in schools. By introducing state-funded schools alongside existing Church schools and developing partnership with the Christian Churches, it provided the financial means to prepare children for community work and the labour market. According to Gates (2005) the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were determined to strengthen and consolidate their position, thus taking full advantage of generous offers of government funds for new buildings. Within 15 years, the number of Church of England schools rose from 6,382 to 11,864, and Catholic schools from 350 to 892. In the same period, the number of children attending Church schools doubled to two million (Gillard, 2011).

### **2.3.3. Historical Changes: The 1944 Education Act**

Growing changes in social, political and economic aspects prior to the 1944 Education Act, has underpinned this movement towards equality of education for all children from different classes. The social climate was to ensure that working class children were taught to be obedient, and gained basic numeracy and literacy skills needed for the roles they were expected to perform in society, for example, working in shops, factories etc. This limited education according to Burden *et al.* (2000) was aimed at increasing economic efficiency by increasing the skills of the working classes. In terms of political climate, the Second World War led to major changes in the nature of education in Britain. Jones (2003) highlighted that there was a complete cycle of reform following the war, owing

much of its energy to the high expectations that people had for a post-war society. The idea fostered by the war led to increased support for education as a right available to all, rather than a privilege obtained by wealth. Education was seen as a key defence against prejudice post-war. Therefore it needed broader aims not just preparation for work; but rather preparation for citizenship in a democratic society (McCulloch, 1994) (see chapter 3 section 3.5).

The aforementioned social, political and economic changes with broad objectives linked to state involvement, society, class and individuals development, underpinned the 1944 Education Act. It marked transparent changes in education policy by establishing secondary education for all up to the age of 15 (Jones, 2003). Such change of education contradicted the old system whereby secondary education was only available to a privileged minority. This highlighted the aim of education according to the 1944 Education Act: to create an educational system based on a child's aptitudes and merits, rather than parents social circumstances. Cooper (2002) believed that it provided a means, eliminating class divisions in society, creating equality of opportunity for children, and fostering a sense of solidarity and cohesion across the whole community. It can be argued that the 1944 Education Act was holistic: seeing intellectual development as just one part of the development of the child, aiming to rebuild a sense of community in the lives of children for social and economic aspects as well as to be able to engage in all political climates.

In addition, Cooper (2002) further argued that the Act did not break down class divisions. He affirmed that divisions were perpetuated by the 1944 Education Act, with the middle classes more able to do well in selection, and this, in effect, undermined the whole project, as there was no equality of opportunity under the Act. Those from the working classes were still disadvantaged by the education system (Ball, 2009). Moreover, Jones (2003) argued that the period of 1950 to 1960 saw rapid immigration of people from former colonies to Britain, who were also disadvantaged by the 1944 Education Act as children belonging to ethnic minority groups were seen as a problem. Immigrants were treated as potentially destructive to the British way of life; therefore, were systematically and institutionally discriminated against (Pilkington, 2003). During this period, Jones, (2003) highlighted that attitudes towards race and education began to change. Therefore, government policy shifted towards integration, tolerance and equal

opportunities for ethnic minority to help recreate schools as more multicultural (see chapter 3 section 3.4).

Long standing conflicts between Church and state over the directorship of schools were seen as the norm in education. Church schools faced funding challenges as they were mostly housed in Victorian buildings, which Churches struggled to maintain. Although the Church of England exerted control over most rural and urban schools, Jones (2003:18) indicated that “they were in many cases the epitome of low-level mass education”. Nevertheless, Churches were left entirely responsible for school maintenance costs if it included denominational teachings by the 1902 Education Act. As a result, the 1944 Education Act attempted to resolve disputes between Church and state in return for a degree of autonomy. According to Mackinnon and Statham (1999:110) the Act:

“created a unified framework which brought the Church schools under state control but left them with varying degrees of independence according to how much financial support the Church continued to provide”.

It is fascinating to note that in both Acts, 1902 and 1944, one element keeps emerging: the extreme opposition for state funding the Church. The former New Labour government could have opted to subsidise school costs, but it would have faced strong objections from nonconformists and secularists. The Association for Teachers and Lecturers (ATL, 2007) stated that nonconformists expressed a sense of anxiety regarding Christian schools especially the Church of England and certainly rejected the idea of funding schools based on religious foundations. As a means of easing such political tensions, the 1944 Education act proposed to trade influence for public funding of Church schools in return for majority Local Education Authority (LEA) representation on governing bodies. According to Gillard (2011) it was estimated that only a small number of schools would opt for voluntary-aided status (500 of 9,000). However, due to the serious nature of financial struggle in religious schools, as highlighted above, astonishingly 3,000 schools joined, including Roman Catholic and Jewish schools.

As part of the deal, confessional RE was singled out from or within the curriculum and state schools were by law required to provide non-

denominational RE, a daily act of worship and teach the Agreed Syllabus for RE (Hewer, 2001). Confessional RE was both an important part of schooling prior to 1944, but was contested at that time; for instance, citizenship was being seriously considered as an alternative (Freathy, 2008). Therefore, the 1944 Education Act, for the first time, made RE and worship compulsory, reflecting the existing practice. It formalised the teaching of Agreed Syllabuses in the county (state/public) schools which were explicitly Christian in content and orientation (Cush, 2007). Therefore, the school day in every religious and voluntary school began with collective worship (Mackinnon and Statham, 1999). However, in aided schools RE was left to the discretion of its religious funding body. The Act did not state which religion should be taught as it was assumed that Christianity was the only faith which would be required (Simon, 1965).

Barber (1994) suggested that in many ways, the 1944 Education act was devoted to establish religious education than thinking about a modern system of education suited to the needs of post-war society. On the other hand, some parents may object to RE being taught in school and wish their children to be withdrawn from those lessons. This is known as the 'conscience clause' which was an important term in education in England throughout the nineteenth century. The conscience clause was voluntarily used by some Church schools from the 1820s onwards and was made compulsory for all new schools from 1852 by the Committee of Privy Council on Education (Louden, 2003). This allowed parents to withdraw their children from RE and collective worship that violated their religious principles (*ibid*). Although the term 'conscience clause' was not actually mentioned in the text of 1870 Education Act or 1944 Education Act and is based on a historical myth, it was carried through from one Act to the next (Murphy, 1971). According to Simon (1965) the clause was designed to protect parents' consciences about the type of denominational RE their children received. Although the conscience clause shaped religious education, it was rejected by nonconformists (Louden, 2003).

#### **2.3.4. The Education Reform Act 1988**

In the 1970s, economic recession and social unrest altered the direction of education (McCulloch, 1994). As Brown *et al.* (1997) discussed, the 1970s saw the end of the continued economic growth, and the government looked to deliver education more cheaply and ensure that the focal point was on delivering skills

required for economic recovery, then growth. As the youth labour market collapsed, there was also a significant section of young people who were leaving school at the age of 16 without jobs (Jones, 2003). Schools were assigned a central role in all these issues as; it was argued that they failed to equip individuals with skills required for the economy (*ibid*). The Education Reform Act 1988 (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, HMSO, 1988) was passed by the New Right Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher. The Act was a fundamental change to the education policy, setting in motion most of the elements of the education system today (Peace, 2006). It also aimed to match education more closely to economic need with a more business-orientated National Curriculum (Barker, 2008). There were three main thrusts to the educational ideas; modernisation, tradition and marketisation. In terms of modernisation, Jones (2003) explained that the focus was to ensure education provided the employability skills, therefore contributing towards a successful economy (see chapter 3 section 3.4). In terms of tradition, policies espoused a notion of national identity which had an emphasis on nation centred themes (Burden *et al.*, 2000). According to Jones (2003) marketisation policy was a central theme in all Conservative policies, and education was no exception. By increasing standard testing of pupils, schools publishing results and allowing parental choice over where their children were schooled, it was expected that good schools would flourish, and bad schools close (Ball, 1990). To achieve this, the 1988 Act transferred power from the LEA to school governors. This was very critical as it lifted the LEA's impositions on school intakes (designed to ensure admission equality) and linked a schools budget to the number of pupils on the roll.

The 1980s had been a time when research (Grugeon and Woods, 1990; Gokulsing, 2006) had shown that the education system was failing ethnic minority pupils, and many LEAs had multicultural education policies that aimed to ameliorate these inequalities. However, with the removal of power from the LEAs, these initiatives were marginalised, and as Troyna and Carrington (1990) wrote, the 1988 Education Reform Act marked a return to a liberal approach to education which presumes equality and gloss over difference. Hence failing to comprehend and incorporate nuances of multiculturalism as they treated everyone as if they were from a privileged white middle class (see chapter 3 section 3.4). Kenneth Baker, the education secretary of the time, summed up the changes by suggesting that the age of social equality was over, and that its



pursuit had left Britain lagging behind its competitors economically (Tomlinson, 2001).

The 1988 Education Reform Act created tension between the deeply rooted beliefs, attitudes and values of the various groups within the New Right (Barker, 2008) particularly between the neo-Liberals (freedom) and the more traditional neo-Conservatives (control). The core elements of neo-liberalism differ in several respects from those of neo-conservatism. According to Chitty (2004), neo-liberals are strong supporters of individual freedom and limit government intervention in economy and society. Whereas, neo-conservatives believe that traditional values and institutions have an important role to play in channelling individual behaviour in socially beneficial directions (*ibid*). Neo-Liberals hoped for a much reduced state control over education and for the expansion of private schools offering a range of curricular designed to meet different parental tastes, whereas, neo-Conservatives supported the idea of a centralised National Curriculum (Peace, 2006). They argued that neglecting the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills necessary for employment and for the efficiency of the economy, was negatively impacting on children's education (Barker, 2008). Therefore, they contested the neo-Conservatives with neo-Liberals who place great emphasis on pupil's freedom at the expense of traditional respect for teachers' authority.

Furthermore, RE came under particular scrutiny as more child-centred approaches to education developed in 1960s. Also changes in the religious composition of the community led to a review of the RE role in schools (Cush, 2007). Therefore, Fancourt (2012) claimed that in 1988 a switch took place from confessional RE to a non-confessional world religions approach, in which Christianity was the main focus. According to Cush (2013) non-confessional RE was viewed as an advocate for multicultural education. However, there have been various discussions about the changes to RE, for example Barnes (2007) highlighted doubts about the value of the changes, Thompson (2004) argues for a return to a more confessional, Christian-focused curriculum and Doble (2005) totally opposes this return. The 1988 Act sets out as the central aim for the school curriculum that it should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society, and prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. As a result the 1988 Act further strengthened the requirement of making RE and collective worship

compulsory (Gillard, 2011) and deliberately located RE as fundamental to the entire curriculum, prior to the National Curriculum. According to the LEA's Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, pupils in schools other than voluntary aided should be taught RE. Traditionally this implies teaching a non-denominational Christian education.

It was necessary in Religious Education to consider "the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain" as highlighted in the Education Reform Act 1988 - section 8(3) (HMSO, 1988). According to Chitty (2004), incorporating children from different backgrounds within the same school should be viewed as a positive step as it would enhance society's integration and stability. According to Bates (1994) the move to the study of world religions started before 1988, particularly with the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus in 1975, which had also included secular worldviews. The term non-confessional signifies the study of the beliefs, values and practices of one or another religion (Fancourt, 2012). It is intended that young people learn about aspects of different religions as a means of developing social tolerance. Bates (1994) argued that non-confessional RE aims to teach about different beliefs and practices without engendering belief or a desire to participate.

In all maintained schools RE must be taught according to either the locally agreed syllabus or in accordance with the school's designated religion or religious denomination, or in certain cases the trust deed relating to the school. In schools without a religious character, RE must be taught according to the locally agreed syllabus adopted by the LA by which the school is maintained (DCSF, 2010). RE provision in foundation and voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character is to be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus (*ibid*). However, in voluntary-aided schools with a religious character RE is to be determined by the governors and in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed relating to the school (OfSTED, 2014). Similarly, academies, whether or not they have a religious character, are required, through their funding agreements, to teach RE as part of the curriculum and have daily acts of collective worship. For academies without a religious character, this will be the locally agreed syllabus (*ibid*). For denominational academies with a religious character (C of E, RC, Muslim and most Jewish academies), this will be in line with the denominational syllabus (DCSF, 2010). For non-denominational (such

as Christian) faith academies this can be either of the above, depending on the wishes of the sponsor and what is agreed by Ministers (*ibid*).

Fancourt (2012) affirms that Christianity not only has a significant place in the RE curriculum and in Christian faith schools but also in community schools. Therefore, a wave of publicity greeted the Education Reform Act 1988 which emphasised that RE was required to reflect the fact that religious traditions in the UK are in the main Christian (Gillard, 2001). Such clause within the Act faced controversy over the interpretation continued before and after the Act. Reading this clause it could be understood as requiring a preponderance of teaching Christianity at the expense of the broader world religions approach. On the other hand, one can argue that the text of the Act itself does not support this narrow interpretation, as the RE syllabus, according to Chitty (2002), is the responsibility of the governing body, in that they have the power to decide its content, time and resources.

Due to its significance and developing nature, the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) inspection of RE enabled a more consistent picture of the teaching and learning taking place, thus tracking areas of change and improvements. Moreover, the government (HMSO, 2010:23) singled out the teaching of Christianity, but mentioned teaching of other religions for example: "The study of religion should...provide an appropriate balance between and within Christianity, other principal religions, and, where appropriate other religious traditions and worldviews". Gokulsing (2006) argued that the children in our schools need the spiritual dimension taken seriously and religion-based schools are in the best position to do that. It seems that religious beliefs often influence family attitudes towards the education of their children.

#### **2.4. Expansion of Faith School Notion**

When New Labour came into government in 1997, education was a top priority, as had been promised in the build-up to the election, and there was much activity regarding education policy. The educational policy of the Blair government aimed to give individuals opportunities to invest in themselves (Hyland, 2002). However, such policy can be criticised. One can argue that although there may be new high-skill jobs in the economy, there will be a need for lower-skill jobs, as these are crucial to servicing the economy. Hence,

Giddens (2000) suggests that the ideology which involves economic management and planning are flawed. Lloyd and Payne (2003) believe that there will never be enough high-skill jobs for all the individuals that the government is trying to support. Therefore, to support the former New Labour government (Blair, 1998), Giddens developed a framework known as 'Third way' which is a position that tries to resolve right-wing and left-wing politics by encourage a varying synthesis of right-wing economic and left-wing social policies.

Lloyd and Payne, (2003) argued that there is a direct link between individual education and the growth of economy, in that the more skills individuals have, the more they earn and produce, hence a growth in the economy. However, it is not necessarily that higher skills and education, which the former New Labour was emphasising, often leads to higher wages and economic growth, as earning more can be associated with factors other than education and levels of qualifications (Apple, 2001). It is no doubt that structural barriers in education that are material or cultural may hold children back from taking or making the best of opportunities, despite their best qualifications. Similarly, black and ethnic minority groups tend to be disadvantaged at school due to racism (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). Therefore, Giddens (2000) makes clear that the social purposes for education are linked to the fact that for a strong and thriving economy, a socially cohesive and stable society is needed to provide the context for that economic success. Rikowski (2001) further argues that it is not possible to build a successful system of education around business needs. Therefore, business and/or economy are not the right measures to determine how the system of education should run and be effective (Ball, 2009).

There was a pivotal moment in policy where there was a shift of discourse, therefore, giving birth to the term 'faith schools' in the UK. Addressing this issue from a political ideology perspective involves globalisation. Arguably, it is the inward migration of people from Europe and elsewhere that created issues of multiculturalism and diversity. Therefore, globalisation contributed to that shift and discourse from Church/Christian schools to faith schools. The term 'faith school' was introduced in Britain in 1990 following demands by Muslims for institutions comparable to the existing Church schools. However, there were issues entangled with the term faith school as society was increasingly becoming secular and there was a decline in Church attendance. Pring (2012)

stated that there was a paradox in the fact that 33% schools in the UK were faith schools when 45% people claim to have no faith. In spite of the decline in religious adherence and Church attendance, (*ibid*) affirmed that religion remained for many a significant marker of their personal identity; therefore, contributing to the proliferation of faith schools.

The issue of faith-based schools has been one of the most debated questions at the interface of religion and education in England. The notion of faith-based education took a historic turn in 1997 under Tony Blair's party. It is assumed that as part of a strategy to attract votes and increase confidence in the state school system, the former New Labour government attempted to expand religious education and the number of faith-based schools. Gillard (2007) signifies that a quarter of England's primary schools were controlled by faith groups (either Church of England or Roman Catholic). It was believed that different Christian groups were instrumental in promoting education with a strong inculcation of religious values (Ball, 2009), and there were concerns about discriminating against other faiths, therefore, the government began considering other religious denominations. However, Gillard (2007) indicated that government advisors warned Blair of the danger of mixing religion and politics in the drive to win votes. Such warnings had minimal effect on Blair as he believed that faith schools would contribute to the development of a pluralistic society and help to legitimise the culture identity of ethnic groups. It could be argued that this was certainly not how I experienced both primary and secondary faith schools (see sections 1.3 and 1.4). The former New Labour's policy also perceived faith schools as a vehicle for delivering higher academic achievements, increased parental choice and coherent morality systems for pupils (Burden *et al.*, 2000). It is evident that New Labour went beyond satisfying Muslim voters by supporting faith schools and wishes to expand on them, which included Muslim schools (Parker-Jenkins, 2002; Gokulsing, 2006). What is most telling in the support for faith schools, as argued by De Jong and Snik (2002), is the lack of confidence in community schools in terms of adequate cultural sensitivity or high academic attainment.

Government plans to increase faith schools coincided with racial tensions, poor housing and unemployment. Several studies and experts in education (e.g. Harris, 2001a; Cohen, 2005; Smith, 2006b) have argued that the government should not fund faith schools of any kind believing that they would cause

discrimination amongst other faiths and reject the idea of education being dominated by religion. One of the major concerns shared by those with strong reservations about funding faith schools is that they may not attach sufficient importance to children's autonomy (see sections 6.2 and 6.3). Similarly, (Harris, 2001a) argues that a significant part of the population is against faith schools being legal, citing potential damages to a multicultural society as their main reason. There are also increasing calls in the media for the state to stop "playing God" with regards to state funding of faith schools (Cohen, 2005). Marples, (2005) argued that faith schools should not exist and promoted the concept of community schools, which should become secular with citizenship education replacing RE. However, Smith (2006b) believed that public funds should be earned through evidence of collective learning practices and of providing a broad spectrum of services to the whole community, as it is the public who pay such a large proportion of their costs.

In addition, Gillard (2007) suggested that an increase in faith schools may possibly lead to segregation in Local Authorities (LA) which have the highest numbers of faith schools, in particular, those with restrictive admissions or curriculum. Grayling (2001) argues that faith schools were exacerbating racial and religious divisions due to riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford which fuelled the complaints of the secularists regarding religious schools (see chapter 3 section 3.4). Furthermore, Cohen (2005) emphasised that communities were becoming increasingly isolated along racial, cultural and religious lines, and that segregated schools were fuelling such partitions. Ignorance, misunderstanding and fear, were at the centre of the ill-feeling, worsened by policy (*ibid*). Although the former New Labour government emphasised that faith schools provided quality education with a strong school ethos and high academic attainments (Burtonwood, 2000a), evidence for this is ambiguous. A study by the Home Office revealed that faith schools were amongst the worst offenders of perpetrating religious prejudice, therefore, it reinforced the view that schools should be sensitive to religious diversity (Weller *et al.*, 2000). Similarly, expansion of faith schools also coincided with issues regarding Catholic schools being criticised as authoritarian and socially divisive (Keith and Page, 1985; Paton, 2006). Similarly Jewish schools were also facing challenges before it became acceptable and Muslim schools struggling to achieve a state funded school. However, Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005) strongly believe that much of the

current political and public debate regarding faith schools has been conducted at the level of prejudice and generalisation.

Walford (2003) argued that the former New Labour party continued to see the education system as a marketplace, to increase efficiency and quality across the system of education. This has had implications for schools and colleges as Hill (2001) suggested that they needed to demonstrate quality to parents and promising to give children good education measured by good results. In the run up to the General Election of 2001 it was apparent that religion was becoming a serious element in the government's plans, not just education. In February the government published a Green Paper announcing its intention to increase the number of single faith schools (DfES, 2001) and on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March, Blair addressed a conference of religious organisations from both Christian and other faith backgrounds. He outlined his own religious motivation in politics and stressed the value of religion in modern society (Hill, 2001; Ameen and Hassan, 2013). He insisted that Church schools were a pillar of the education system, "valued by very many parents for their faith character, their moral emphasis and the high quality of education they generally provide" (Bates, 2001:2). More widely, he called for religious charities and organisations to become partners of the government in promoting health and welfare provision (Walford, 2003).

New faith schools have been established along similar lines to those of other faith groups, such as Catholic and Jewish ones, reflecting community settlement patterns. Support for faith-based schools whose members are of different racial backgrounds also stem from concerns over racism occurring in other faith schools (Burtonwood, 2000a). By the end of the former New Labour government figures revealed that there were just over 20,000 maintained schools in England of which almost 7,000 are faith schools (DfE statistics, 2010). The DfE statistics highlight that approximately 68% of maintained faith schools are Church of England schools and 30% are Roman Catholic. The forthcoming table illustrates 5350 of religious schools associated with major Christian denominations and 54 schools that belong to other religions (DfE statistics, 2010).

<b>5350 Christian religious schools</b>	<b>54 schools of other religions</b>
Christian (32)	Jewish (38)
Church of England (4598)	Muslim (11)
Roman Catholic (2010)	Sikh (4)
Methodist (26)	Hindu (1)
United Reform Church (1)	
Joint Christian Faiths (61)	
Seventh Day Adventist (1)	
Quaker (1)	
United Reform Church (1)	
Greek Orthodox (1)	

In the independent sector there are approximately 2400 independent schools of which 957 are faith schools (Edubase, 2010). Of those 957 schools, 786 have a Christian ethos or are inter-denominational and the remaining 171 schools comprise Muslim (118), Jewish (49), Hindu (2), Buddhist (1), Sikh (1).

De Jong and Snik (2002) set out to defend faith schools against the argument that they necessarily restrict development of individual autonomy in pupils. They argued that faith schools are an alternative for acquiring individual autonomy through its cultural context. Similarly, Short (2003:565) maintained that “faith-based schooling is not only compatible with social cohesion but can actually reinforce it”. In promoting children’s self-esteem and awareness of their cultural heritage, schools are strengthening their confidence as individuals (*ibid*). According to Saeed (2007), intolerance existed before faith schools, and would still exist if the decision was taken to abolish them. Developing integration and eradicating faith division would contribute to better education thereby leading to social stability, economic growth and political support (*ibid*). Similarly, if taught adequately, RE would encourage integration, tolerance and understanding (Silver, 2007).

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2004) described a dual attainment target for RE. Most (but not all) locally agreed syllabuses for RE make reference to the two attainment targets, however, where this approach is



taken, it is crucial that both targets feature in planning and delivering of RE (Charter, 2014). The two attainment targets are as follows (QCA, 2004):

Attainment target 1: Learning about religion and belief. It includes enquiry into, and investigation of, the nature of religion, its beliefs, teachings and ways of life, sources, practices and forms of expression. It also covers pupils' knowledge and understanding of individual religions and how they relate to each other as well as the study of the nature and characteristics of religion.

Attainment target 2: Learning from religion and belief. It is concerned with developing pupils' reflection on and response to their own and others' experiences in the light of their learning about religion. It develops pupils' skills of application, interpretation and evaluation of what they learn about religion. Pupils learn to develop and communicate their own ideas, particularly in relation to questions of identity and belonging, meaning and purpose and truth.

However, Silver (2007) pointed out that individuals are often blocked from access to religious opportunities that are normally available to other members of society which according to her are keys to community integration. Sen (2000) argued that religious exclusion can increase the detachment of groups and individuals from social relations. Schools catering for one specific religion would allow for an increased likelihood of pupils disintegration with each other and limiting their experience of diversity (Brown, 2004). Therefore, according to the above it can be argued that in order for people to become integrated, they must know and understand each other.

#### **2.4.1. School Choice for Parents**

Although parents seem to be interested in the faith aspect when selecting schools, many would perceive that such schools would endow their children with a superior form of education and thereby provide a means to attain better results (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005). For instance, some parents would implement certain religious practices that they do not believe in themselves (attending ceremonies and being seen more often in Churches and Mosques) so their children are offered a place in faith schools (Gibbons and Silva, 2009). There is a definite kind of instrumentalism implicit in that fact but is that the real purpose of a faith-based education or is it to be valued as an end in itself?

Those strongly in favour of faith schools often cite the rights of religious parents, as taxpayers, to ensure that their child has state schooling within a school that promotes their faith (Gibbons and Silva, 2006). However, in areas where faith schools are over-subscribed, there is a real risk that non-religious parents, who are also taxpayers, do not have the same rights of access. Also, should the number of faith schools substantially increase, many parents may lose the right to ensure that their child goes to a community school (Halstead and McLaughlin, 2005). Increased parental choice is not without cost; one parent's choice (and their ability to exercise it) has an impact on the choice of others. Ultimately, with regards to the more popular schools, choice is exercised far more by the school than by the parents. Moreover, Gillard (2001) emphasised that in many parts of the country, especially in rural areas, a Church school is the only realistic option for parents unable or unwilling to transport their children long distances to school (see chapter 1 section 1.4). This is a real dilemma for parents who do not have religious beliefs. Also there are those who live in an area where the only popular school happens to be a faith school. Do parents then pretend to convictions they do not have - even if they find those convictions offensive - for the sake of their children's education (Gibbons and Silva, 2009). Such can be viewed as discrimination against secular parents and their families and as Smith (2001) signifies, this is being proposed by the state in the twenty-first century.

As discussed by Bolton and Gillie (2009), the Education and Inspection Act 2006 gave greater freedoms, to schools in setting their own admission policy, hence providing religious organisations with more influence over the admissions arrangements of schools of their own faith. As a result, parents worry about selection within schools and discrimination of certain religious backgrounds (*ibid*). Additionally the argument for this Act is transferring power to parents to make decisions and selecting schools (HMSO, 2006), but this, arguably, has a considerable impact on notions of faith schools and proliferations of different schools in the sector as a whole. As highlighted previously, there are significant political reasons for the former New Labour party to expand faiths schools, one of which is connected with neo-liberalism (see section 2.3.4). Apple (2001) and Wilkins (2011) suggested that the government perhaps believed in the idea of offering greater choice to parents who are conceived as consumers and who have pupils also conceived as consumers within a marketised system. One can argue that the political motive for explicitly reinforcing choice in the Education and Inspection Act of 2006 (HMSO, 2006) was to create greater choice for

parents and reduce the power of Local Authorities impacting on the system. Therefore, faith schools are then taken at face value. According to Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005:112) "Faith-based schools are said to be popular with parents in that they obtain good examination results, although the evidence for this is far from clear-cut".

On the other hand, parents have the right to have their children educated in accordance with their own philosophical and religious convictions. However, there are worries about providing education that is likely to draw on a single religion in that it is perceived as contributing to society becoming divided and excluded (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005). Le Grand (2007) affirms that some religious parents also have misgivings regarding growth of a discrete educational system that separates rather than unifies children from different ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Therefore, in order to aid community cohesion rather than promote the rights of one section of the community, parental choice for a place in a faith school must be treated as an equality issue (Collins and Snell, 2000).

#### **2.4.2. Diversity and the Expansion of Faith Schools**

The emergence of new faith schools, under the former New Labour administration, instigated by ethnic minority communities demonstrates the promotion of diversity in education which has changed the existing social order in England. There are different levels of diversity in society, e.g. cultural, socio-economic or those based on special needs and disability. According to Tony Blair, combating social exclusion and poverty are essential as bonds of society and community are in a way compatible with the individuality of modern economic, social and cultural life (Levitas, 1998). One could therefore, question to what extent faith schools mirror diversity, or indeed wish to. Crace (2006) stated that numerous primary and secondary headteachers are deeply concerned about the effects of faith schools on the educational system. He believed that learning about and promoting religion should not be part of the education system. Moreover, it was alleged by the former Chief Inspector of OfSTED, David Bell that a growth of Islamic schools posed a challenge to the coherence of British society (Gillard, 2007). Muslims continuously find themselves challenging negative stereotypes, defending their religion, position and existence to some extent and dealing with derogatory comments from local

communities (see section 3.7). According to Marples (2005) the more the government seeks to promote diversity through faith schools, the more divided society has become. Smith (2006a) and Crace (2006) emphasise that state schools based on religion could become a dangerous network of religious and racial divisions. Harris (2001a) suggests that increasing faith schools is not required to produce youngsters aware of the main religious and moral values.

The Education Inspection Act of 2006 (HMSO, 2006) was about promoting choice and diversity, with the latter representing a series of options of different schools, hence having a diverse market of schools enhances choice. This arguably connects with neo-liberalism (see section 2.3.4) as the New Labour government is appearing to offer greater choice for individual parents and children (Chitty, 2004). However, when John Major previously had been Prime Minister in 1990, Gillard (2011) argued that he inherited an education system from Thatcher suffering from a substantial decline in equality. Therefore, the strategy to regain control from LAs, who were viewed as selective, was to introduce 'specialisation' (Benn and Chitty, 1996). This according to the Major government is where schools could specifically cater for children who excel at different things. Although there were concerns from the independent National Commission on Education about the compatibility of creating choice and diversity, ignored the concerns and the White Paper: 'Choice and Diversity: A new framework for schools' (HMSO, 1992), was utilised in structuring the foundations of the 1993 Education Act. Chitty (2004) warned that giving parents the choice of a diverse range of schools would ultimately result in selection of pupils by the schools themselves. Giving parents real choice will inevitably lead to schools demanding to choose the kind of pupils who will attend. The former New Labour government presented the expansion of faith schools as a concrete and visible commitment to the development of an inclusive multicultural society in which equal recognition and opportunity is given to all religious communities. Marples (2005) suggests that such action was not naively carried out to embrace culture in its wider sense; however, it was an attempt to make the system more marketised, hence serving particular political and economic values and interests. Brown (2003) believed that representations of various faiths in the education system was not about diversity, rather it was attracting votes from Muslims (who were struggling for state funding).

Berkeley (2008) raised concerns about separating children by faith affiliation and pointed out the risks of ignorance in terms of segregation and children living parallel lives. According to Gillard (2001) single faith schools deny children the right to grow with and learn about people of other backgrounds and beliefs. Grayling (2001:1) confirmed that children should not be educated separately in religious ghettos, "thereby perpetuating the exclusivity and mistrust which must arise if people believe their religion is the only true one and everyone else is wrong". Indeed, 2001 was not a good year for anyone seeking to promote religious involvement in education. It was a moment of crisis when the inter-ethnic disturbances in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham broke out and as a result, a report on community cohesion was published in an attempt to salvage the situation (see chapter 3 section 3.4).

### **2.4.3. Faith Schools' Admission**

One of the most interesting issues to emerge from the recent debate on the expansion of faith schools is the composition of the school role and the question of inclusion. In the past, schools based on a religious ethos have tended to recruit almost exclusively from their own religious community (Marples, 2005). This has been substantiated in terms of the need to develop and nurture a shared religious identity. Indeed, where admission policy has been opened, there has been care to ensure that those pupils from outside the faith constitute less than 10% of the total school population in order to insure that the school identity is not lost. This extends to the recruitment of staff also, where efforts are made to ensure teachers are not simply passive but active supporters of the faith (Jackson, 2003; TES, 2002a). In the absence of sufficient staff drawn from their own religious community, Parker-Jenkins (2002) highlighted that Muslim schools, for example, recruit teachers who are themselves of a religious background or who are sympathetic to the promotion of religion.

In order to defuse opposition to the expansion of faith schools, the former New Labour government attempted to change admission policy concerning C of E schools. Anglican schools were to consult diocesan boards of education annually over their admission policy. The support for greater inclusion comes from the Archbishop of Canterbury who called for Church of England schools to take children of other faiths or of none, even if it means rejecting pupils of practicing Christianity (TES, 2002a). However, not all Anglican schools shared

this desire to improve inclusion rates (TES, 2002a), and there were no announcements made to change admission policy in the Catholic Church (Catholic Education Service, 2005). Additionally, some leading clerics were unhappy about moves towards inclusivity, for example, Reverend Peter Shepherd (TES, 2002a) condemned the call for C of E schools to accept pupils from other faiths. Difficulties have also been expressed by deputy headteacher Akhmed Hussain of Al-Hijrah school who stated “allocating places to non-Muslims would simply not work in this largely Asian community” (TES, 2002b:23). Similarly the Catholic Church reported that it could not afford more school places for children of other faiths due to poverty and staff shortage, adding “rejecting even more Catholics from the places that they have funded and nurtured over so many years would cause considerable pain” (TES, 2002c:17).

It is recognised that faith schools operate a variety of admissions policies, often determined by the schools’ mission and levels of subscription. It is also acknowledged that there are many faith schools in areas of high social deprivation which do not have selective admissions policies; their mission is to serve their local community through education regardless of the faith make-up of that community. However, other faith schools see their mission as the transmission of religious belief and culture from one generation to another (Cush, 2005), and have closed admission procedures with the majority of places allocated to those from their own faith community.

According to the British Humanist Association (BHA) (2006), faith schools choose their pupils, rather than pupils choosing faith schools. The question of admission not only relates to equality of access, but also the perceived academic success of faith schools. Cush (2005) and Gibbons and Silva (2006) claimed that higher performance levels of faith schools occur in those with selective admissions procedures and that these higher rates of achievement are due to autonomous governance and admissions arrangements and not due to religious character. This is significant when considering one of the key drivers of the former New Labour’s government expansion of faith schools which is the perception of their higher academic success. Compared to national averages, pupils in faith and autonomous schools are much less likely to be entitled to free school meals and are more likely to have English as their first language (Cohen, 2005).

## 2.5. The Coalition Government (2010)

In the publication, *The Coalition: Our programme for government* (Cabinet Office, 2010) the current Government sets out its intention to expand on the number of academies which follow an inclusive admissions policy. Academy schools are state schools funded directly by central government (the Department for Education) and independent by local education authority control. The majority of academies are secondary schools, however since the Coalition government there has been an increase in academy primary schools (Hatcher and Jones, 2011).

Furthermore, an extension of the academies programme, free Schools are new schools introduced by the Coalition Government in 2010. They are state-funded school which are free to attend but not controlled by a Local Authority. Free schools are set up by parents, teachers and charities in response to demand from the local community (DfE, 2015). However, Gillie (2012) stated that free school are subject to the same admissions code and OfSTED inspections as all other maintained schools and are expected to comply with standard performance measures as all other state-funded schools. Between 2010 and 2015 more than 400 free schools were approved for opening in England, which represent more than 230,000 school places across the country (DfE, 2015). According to Cameron (*ibid*) free schools not only outperforming other schools, but they are raising the performance of those around them. There were many concerns that faith groups would take over faith schools as 5 of the original 16 schools were faith schools: two Jewish, one Evangelical Anglican, one Hindu and one Sikh (BBC, 2010). The BHA (2013) confirmed that since 2010-2013 there were 831 proposals to establish free schools of which 40% where faith based. However, many faith groups applying for free schools have been less successful.

The Coalition also vowed to work alongside faith groups as a means of initiating more faith schools and allowing religious organisations to run a new stream of state-funded schools. This government also aims to facilitate inclusive admissions policies in as many faith schools as possible. The Coalition government also said that more faith schools are to be opened under extensive education reforms by the government, provided that the new faith schools do not

insist on pupils upholding its religious ethos (Paton, 2010). In an interview with the Daily Telegraph (Paton, 2010:4), Mr Cameron stated:

“I think that faith schools are a really important part of our education system and they often have a culture and ethos which helps to drive up standards. If anything, I would like to see faith schools grow”.

With respect to the Liberal democrats, the view is quite the contrary as they believe that faith-based admissions can be socially divisive (Bolton and Gillie, 2009). The BHA (2010) was astonished to see the Coalition government maintain what he believes as Labour’s most unpopular policy. Despite the government’s policy which focuses on funding existing and new faith schools, the question is about how money is divided in relation to Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh schools. Although the Coalition government support the concept of faith schools and encourage opening further schools, it seems that they have not structured a clear policy to minimise disintegration, social injustice and unequal admission for all faith groups. Additionally, despite their strategy of continuous OfSTED inspections to monitor the religious aspects in school (DfE, 2010); they have not discussed how faith presents itself in the curriculum and way of developing a cohesive environment amongst pupils.

## **2.6. Concluding Remarks**

Considering the history of education, social, political and economic background, current sensitivities and levels of influence practised by some of the main religious affiliations, it seems that changing the status and existing independence of State-maintained faith schools can be difficult and complex. It could be argued that faith schools alone will not provide a ‘cure’ for racism or the ‘answer’ to social exclusion, as this requires much more direct action on the part of the government. It also seems that the issue of faith schools will not be easily resolved. However, as a means of living in a tolerant and integrated community, this research approves the call for faith schools to implement measures, through their admissions, curriculum and RE practices to ensure minimal risk of segregation and promote community cohesion. The next chapter discusses broad issues of multiculturalism and Islamophobia on education. In addition, it explores how various bombings, attacks and riots impacted on education and community cohesion.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Culture and Education**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

England's primary schools are now part of a complex structure linking education with health, welfare and childcare (Alexander, 2009). There has been intense public and political interest in educational issues, such as faith schools, community cohesion and multiculturalism. However, Gorard (1999) argues that school success is measured by league tables of results. For example; faith schools are mostly labelled as achieving "perfect" results in league tables (Smith, 2006b; Gibbons and Silva, 2006), and were being over-prescribed as they demonstrated their success in raising standards (Chadwick, 2001). There is, however, no mention of any aspects related to cultural awareness, valuing diversity or contributing to community cohesion. Consequently, there are many concerns over whether faith schools possess a strong spiritual, social or cross-cultural approach to the curriculum or whether such aspects are valued at all. The Education and Inspection Act (2006) further emphasises the existing tensions amongst faith schools as diversity appeared to pose many challenges.

This raises many questions for researchers and sheds a new light on the significance of cultural diversity and cultural awareness in education (see Rohner, 1984). This chapter seeks to review the concept of culture and its relation on education. It also focuses on the issues of multiculturalism and community cohesion. The importance of a school ethos and how it operates within schools are also explored. Finally this chapter discusses the term Islamophobia, highlighting its main causes and possible implications on Muslims and the community. Specifically, it explores the effect of Islamophobia within the framework of education. Elements of faith and Religious Education are woven through the discussion.

#### **3.2. The Concept of Culture**

Culture is a vast topic as it embraces almost everything in the world. It ranges from art and literature, to issues of beliefs, family life, customs, attitudes, social habits, and conceptual systems produced or shared by a particular society.

Cultures are not only “challenged and changed by interactions’ with other cultures, but maybe criticised from within” (Cush, 2013:64). Burtonwood (1996) defines culture as the totality of the mental and physical reactions and activities that characterise the behaviour of individuals in relation to their natural environment, other groups, members of the group itself and of each individual. McCarthy and Carter (1994) define culture in terms of the customs, worldview, language, kinship, social organisation and other practices of people which set that group apart as a distinctive group.

### **3.3. Culture and Education**

According to Acker (1990) research has become more concerned about education and culture and they suggest that there is an indisputable relationship between both. Similarly, Yosso (2005) emphasises the links between culture and education as the process of learning depends largely on corresponding cultures. It is impossible to think of education as independent of culture. Short (2002) draws on his own work on Jewish schools to argue that, teaching about other cultures is sufficient to compensate for the insularity of the faith school. During school life, as experienced in a secondary school (see chapter 1 section 1.4), pupils undoubtedly undergo the process of learning and understanding about culture.

The impact of cultural diversity and cross-faith interaction on education is challenging and is probably one of the most complicated issues in schools. Gillborn (2005) argues that cultural awareness is an essential requirement and an integral part of teaching of and learning about equality. Recognising the importance of cultural influences, Nelson (1987) pointed out that cultural items such as ways of thinking, customs, conventions and idioms are important in understanding and communication. Education and culture are inseparable and in order to gain some insight into cultural identity in education, Hwer (2001) supports the idea of extending state funding to various faith schools. In a cultural context, faith schools are to be supported only insofar as they contribute to the ultimate achievement of acknowledging and teaching about other faiths (Ameen and Hassan, 2013).

Met and Byram (1999) stresses the importance for pupils to have the opportunity to access other cultures, which is intrinsic to learning. Learning can thus be

considered as the mirror of culture, in the sense that pupils can see a culture through learning. Teaching culture, therefore, involves informing pupils of various concepts about its geography, political history, religious aspects, music and famous people. It can be argued that unless pupils can see direct personal benefits and a relevance to their lives in what they are taught in school, they have no clear goal (Gillborn, 2005). Therefore, it appears that awareness of faith and cultural diversity is an essential requirement for improving education standards and creating a nurturing school atmosphere. It seems safe enough to assert that the relation between education and culture is a necessary consideration in any fruitful teaching and learning process. As a result, it is important for teachers to be conscious and have an understanding of cultural diversity (see section 7.4). However, teachers have continuously struggled with the issue of cultural diversity (Cohen and Manion, 1983; Morgan, 2010).

One of the great strengths that religions such as; Christianity and Islam, have to bring is that these faiths cross the ethnic divides, and provide the ground for creative multiculturalism in schools. A great deal accomplished in the name of multicultural diversity has also been challenged (Crace, 2006). It can be argued that understanding of other cultures would enable pupils to engage with the way of life, values and ideas of other communities, is a form of cultural exchange. A multicultural approach could be achieved via daily reading of newspapers, watching and listening to current events and programmes about geographical, and historical documentation, etc. Instead of blaming cultural diversity for the negative influence it might have on pupils, it may be better to keep pace with the progress of the world and see life as it is.

### **3.4. Multiculturalism and Education**

In response to anti-immigration policies which started in the late 1960 (East and Chan, 2008), the former New Labour government committed to a multiculturalists approach in 1997, although, according to Race (2011b), they were not supportive of the multiculturalism idea. Modood (2007) suggests that multiculturalism immersed to create a harmonious and democratic society by acknowledging differences. It was felt that society itself would be more stable and cohesive if children from different backgrounds were able to mix together in the same school (*ibid*). The idea behind multiculturalism education was to appreciate and reflect on aspects of cultural diversity in the school curriculum

(Cush, 2013) and as indicated by Race (2014:213) “Multiculturalism at the very least gives us a starting point to examine race and ethnicity issues”. However, according to the current Coalition government, David Cameron in his speech in Munich, 2011 (BBC, 2011) affirmed that state multiculturalism has failed. Mahamdallie (2011) suggested that Cameron’s critique of multiculturalism was ill-timed as the economic decline further fuelled issues about rights in Europe and the ‘war on terror’ which in turn gave license to racism and Islamophobia. His comments angered Muslim groups and many communities and individuals saw it as a clear cause for concern (*ibid*). Race (2011b:7) suggested that the speech sent out “worrying signals to everyone who continues to work to increase understandings of cultural diversity and multiculturalism”. Similarly, Hayes (2011) states that multiculturalism ought not to be divisive, indicating that there is a richness to be gained through mutual understanding, creation and partnership. However, Cameron’s criticism of ‘state multiculturalism’ was unusual as the coalition government continued to promote faith schools and the role of religious organisations in representing minority views (Mahamdallie, 2011).

This section explores how aspects of multiculturalism were apparent in education over time. The Plowden Report (Department of Education and Science – DES, 1967) was more child-centred; however, it was interesting to note that the curriculum in that period would have been focused on Christianity as a true reflection of what society was like then. According to David (1980), the composition of society has shifted as ideas about what should and/or does count in education have evolved over time. The fact that UK society is now composed of groups with widely differing backgrounds, traditions, lifestyles and religious beliefs, cannot be ignored. Chitty (2002) argues that the plurality of such groups and interests within our society should be seen as a positive source of strength. It must be one of education’s many functions to help create a society in which all forms of diversity – racial, cultural and religious – are welcomed and ‘celebrated’. Becoming educated in this sense would encompass being respectful towards others regardless of faith and race, and sharing knowledge, resources and feelings with members of the community. It was the view of the American educationalist John Dewey that a connection must be made between education and the community; therefore, schooling should equip young people with both the ability and the determination to improve society according to changing needs. Dewey (1916:74) stated that “the conception of education as a

social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind". It is believed that the main purpose of education is to develop social and cultural values as well as moral responsibilities in the community (*ibid*).

Despite the equitable aims of the multiculturalism movement, the 1970s witnessed a series of economic, political and social crises, including inflation and the world oil crisis. Optimism and hope were quickly replaced by cynicism and despair. However, Callaghan in his 1976 speech at Ruskin College, initiated the perception in both political circles and public minds that there was a close relationship between the needs of the economy and the education system (Phillips, 2001). He emphasised that "goals of our education... are clear enough. They are to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive place in society, and also to fit them to do a job of work" (Callaghan, 1976:1). Hence, by focusing upon education so explicitly, Callaghan linked these difficulties to a perceived crisis in education. The emphasis in education changed to preparing youngsters while still at school for the challenges to be faced in the 'world of work'. His speech indirectly promoted instrumental education as it lacked elements for students to develop social and cultural values in the community, which Dewey (1916) strongly believed were the main purposes of education. Dewey (1971) regarded education as empowering the mind and soul to achieve its full potential. This was in contrast to the education in that period which mainly focused on teaching literacy, numeracy and job-specific skills and drifted away from the essence of citizenship and religious education (see chapter 7 section 7.4).

The notion of multicultural education became loosely problematic, which according to Modood (2007) called for action to support ethnic minorities. The Swann Report in 1985 set out a new multicultural approach to education which acknowledged for the first time the significance of cultural identity in a child's education. However, Race (2007) indicated that the focus was on topics taught in classrooms rather than ethnic minority communities. Moreover the report has been described as a 'past failure' due to it taking eight years for interim and final reports to be completed (*ibid*). However, multiculturalism has been criticised for failing to challenge racism whether in education, employment or social welfare. Stone (1981) criticises multicultural education as a development from a particular theory of education as opposed to improving basic cognitive skills. Her

particular theory is based upon the notion of low self-concept, in which the curriculum is seen as an enhancement process through compensatory child-centred strategies (*ibid*). However, Stone believes that this actually further disadvantages black children by an over-emphasis on the therapeutic approach of attempting to overcome a supposedly low esteem and self-concept.

Similarly, Cohen and Manion (1983) found that many teachers objected to issues of multicultural education on the grounds that children were not aware of racial differences and to teach race relations formally would be counter-productive. Nevertheless, in 1988, Thatcher gave an address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, offering a theological justification for her ideas on the market economy. Although, quoting St. Paul by saying "If a man will not work he shall not eat", Thatcher still reinforced the importance of having a job which is accessible via education. Once again, it was clear to see the dominant instrumental use and connection of education and work. Although advancements in all fields, including science and technology were made possible through education, Brown *et al.* (1997) emphasised that the main purpose of education was at that period limited to solely obtaining a job. However, Kowalczewski (1982) and Hammond (2007) asserted that an awareness of and understating about multiculturalism through education can help schools and its community live together in harmony where everyone is entitled to commemorate their own culture and respect other faiths.

An additional example of where education was further instrumentalised was during the former New Labour government, which insisted on raising attainment levels in schools (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005). The emphasis was placed on the notion of performance rather than providing children with experience. However, Hargreaves (2004) argued that the significance of being able to function well in groups is an essential part of today's life. With the increased globalisation of media across the board, future professionals will be expected to work with individuals from very different countries and cultures. Therefore, if students are not provided with this experience and have no awareness of various cultures and diversity, they may perhaps face challenges later in life. Similarly, Ball *et al.* (2007) state that the one fundamental purpose of education which has often been overlooked is the socialisation of children. It seems that the rigid structure of the curriculum is indirectly promoting individualism as children are not given proper opportunities to spend time with their peers. It is argued that if such

norms and values are not emphasised and passed down through generations, then there would be a tendency towards disintegration, clashes, and individualism (Saeed, 2007).

According to Race (2011a), it is essential to apply multiculturalism to what is happening socially, culturally and educationally. The Parekh Report, set up by the Runnymede Trust, examined the state of multiethnic Britain and proposed ways of challenging racial discrimination to enhance its cultural diversity (Runnymede Trust, 2000). However, recent events have pushed the concept of faith schooling and multiculturalism to the forefront of educational policy-making. Modood (2005) and Hammond (2007) suggested that the identification of ethnic segregation in schools contributed to the interethnic disturbance noted in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley. The year 2001 will be remembered in Britain for the worst outbreak of urban violence. There were riots in Bradford, Burnley, and Oldham in May, June and July, which were said to have involved South Asian men of either Bangladeshi (in Oldham) or Pakistani origin in response to the popularity of the British National Party (BNP). In Oldham on 26-29 May, around 500 people were involved, two police officers and three members of the public were injured; in Burnley about 400 were involved on 24-26 June, with 83 police officers and 28 members of the public injured, and in Bradford up to 500 people were involved in 'riots' over the weekend of 7-9 July (Bagguley and Hussain, 2005). There were other less serious disturbances in Leeds on 5 June and Stoke-on-Trent on 14-15 July. According to Denham (2002), around 400 people have been arrested in relation to the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham.

Modood (2005) emphasised that due to such disturbances, there should be a push for further research to assess the effect of faith schools and the notion of multiculturalism. One could pose the question of whether faith schools can offer an antidote to such tensions. Abbas (2005) argues that learning in a multicultural environment would create a healthy society whereby children are encouraged to express their cultures. Nonetheless, establishing faith schools which only include children to be taught a specific religion is totally against multiculturalism. This could negatively impact on children's ability to comprehend multiculturalism and celebrate difference amongst cultures. Therefore, Smith (2006a) believes that the initiation of Muslim schools after the riots created segregation rather than supporting multiculturalism or diversity. Additionally, the increasing

influence of Muslim groups and their concerns about Islamophobia (discussed further in section 3.7) in the wake of the Afghanistan and Iraq war has added another political dimension to the ethnic segregation debate. Islam was seen as a threat to public safety and order; therefore, affected the application process for Muslim state funded schools (Gokulsing, 2006).

In the aftermath of these disturbances and as government appointed commissions were carrying out their investigations, the World Trade Centre was attacked on 9/11. The September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 attacks (also referred to as September 11<sup>th</sup>, or 9/11) included a series of four attacks in New York City, USA. Four passenger airlines were said to have been hijacked by 19 members of the al-Qaeda group. Two planes were crashed into the Trade Centre (twin towers), one into the pentagon and the fourth plane, initially targeting Washington, was crashed into a field area (Suganami, 2003). The Commission Report (2004) stated that the attacks killed 2,996 people, including the 227 civilians and 19 hijackers aboard the four planes. Although the attacks of 9/11 raised concerns about the global growth of religious fundamentalism, the 7/7 bombings in London added a sense of urgency to the issue of faith schools, and more broadly, the role of cultural diversity, faith in education and community cohesion in England. London bombings which took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 (often referred to as 7/7) witnessed a series of coordinated suicide attacks in central London. Four British Muslim men were said to have detonated four bombs – three aboard London Underground trains and a fourth on a bus in Tavistock Square. The House of Commons report (2006) stated that as well as the four bombers, 52 civilians were killed and over 700 more were injured in the attacks. The 7/7 attacks occurred the day after London had won its bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games (BBC Sport, 2005), which drew attention to multicultural issues.

It was challenging for the British government to foresee the 7/7 attacks as according to Race (2008:3) the men involved were integrated into British society and “terror seems, in the twenty-first century, to constantly reside just under the surface”. After the 7/7 bombings in London, there were concerns about multiculturalism and questions raised about national identity being forged and misrepresented (Jones, 2005). However, Race (2008:1) highlighted that “multiculturalism *still* matters and is even more important after 7/7 than it was before”. It is believed that the opponents of faith schools have used the climate



of 9/11 and 7/7 bombings in London to push their agenda and stand against multiculturalism. In the media, Trevor Phillips called for the abandonment of multiculturalism as he believed it failed to achieve its objectives (Baldwin and Rozenberg, 2004). He further argued in *The Daily Telegraph*, that multiculturalism in schools and increasing segregation in housing by ethnic groups were “driving communities apart” (Jones, 2005:5). Criticisms of multiculturalism have resulted in a call for a policy review and increased emphasis on integration. In January 2006, Gordon Brown, a former UK Prime Minister, called for a better balance between diversity and integration - and for greater prominence to be given to British history: “we should not recoil from our national history - rather we should make it more central to our education ... not just dates, places and names ... but a narrative that encompasses our history” (East and Chan, 2008:1). Despite the objections about multiculturalism, Race (2011a) suggested that the state was moving away from multiculturalism towards integration and the importance of recognising cultural diversity.

According to East and Chan (2008), disregarding the teaching about other cultures and excluding the values of the British domestic state e.g. the rule of law, the sovereignty of Parliament and national loyalty would create tension, discrepancy and division. It is therefore, no surprise that schools have been subjected to sustained critique. Although, Johnston (2005) warns of the dangers this may cause to British values, it could be argued that British values are not undermined when schools acknowledge other cultures. Chief executive Mohammed Shafiq said: “multiculturalism is about understanding each other’s faiths and cultures whilst being proud of our British citizenship” (BBC, 2011:1). Moreover, published in January 2007, the Ajebo review reported a general neglect of teaching about issues of identity and diversity in Citizenship (DfES, 2007). Although the report discusses citizenship curriculum at secondary schools, it revealed that issues around racism, bullying and being different needed to be acknowledged and discussed in classes. This resonates with the issues faced by the two primary schools in the research and highlights what needs to be done to nurture multiculturalism within young children.

It is difficult to avoid that under the umbrella of multiculturalism, some schools with a high percentage of ethnic minority children, focus predominantly on one culture and disregard the others. Certainly, there are many Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu parents who would like their children to learn about their

cultural heritage and religion, but Cohen, (2005) argues that this can be catered for in out-of-school institutions such as Churches, Mosques, Synagogues or Temples and local classes run by the voluntary sector. Similarly, Crace (2006) highlights that developing a sense of belonging in society and social justice cannot be achieved by establishing a single faith school which caters for children of that faith and exclude others. The BHA (2010) argues that faith schools are not diverse and serve only those belonging to their faith; hence the notion of a positive inter-group relation is missing due to lack of cross-cultural contact. One can empathise with the aforementioned frustrations about faith schools, as this research revealed that schools' lacked fostering religious commitment and cultural diversity – see chapters 6 and 7). However, I also understand the demands of Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu parents desiring an education which acknowledges their faith and cultural beliefs, but not exclusively teaches about one religion and neglecting others.

Short (2003) asserts that faith schools are able and can reinforce cultural respect. He is quite dismissive of the value of contact, arguing instead that it is the curriculum of the school that matters rather than opportunities for direct experience of peers from other cultural groups (Short 2002). Short and Lenga (2002) and Short (2003) further argue that given an appropriate curriculum, faith schools need not be socially divisive. Drawing on his own empirical work on Jewish schools, Short (2002) believes that faith schools develop tolerance despite not being culturally inclusive in their pupil population. Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005) affirm that faith schools should provide an education that is socially just via displaying an openness about ways in which particular religious belief impact on the ethos of the school, admission procedures, curriculum content, social learning and engagement with the wider community. However, Marples (2005), argues passionately for children's education to not be subjected to what he regards as the indoctrination of the faith school experience. One can agree that learning in an environment which indoctrinates a specific religion is unhealthy, but being born in a religious country and being educated in a religious school (see chapter 1 section 1.2), it is believed that religion is very important. However, not to the extent that schools focus heavily on one religion and neglect teaching and acknowledging others religions and cultures.

### **3.5. Community Cohesion**

The effect of faith schools in England for community cohesion and cultural understanding has been a matter of debate over the previous two decades. Acknowledging diversity and building up social justice, which include the right of citizenship, seem to be one of the factors of creating societal and community cohesion through an understanding of shared values. Children in faith schools are to be taught the significance of cultural diversity which can enrich the national values; however, such diversity should not create disintegration (Burtonwood, 2006). Gillard (2007, 2011) highlights that focusing on an absolute faith or culture provides the chance for educationalists or politicians to oppose faith schools. This is understandable as segregation can be the results of exclusiveness when it comes to the teaching of faith (see sections 6.2 and 7.2). However, critics disagree with faith schools, (see Cohen, 2005; Crace, 2006) arguing that there are major differences between learning about religion and promoting religiosity. According to Crace (2006), the latter should not be part of the education system. However, one can argue that faith schools is not about promoting religiosity or forcing children to be involved in activities which indoctrinates certain religious beliefs on them. Faith schools are to raise awareness amongst children of the different religious beliefs in the world, acknowledging their festivals, celebrations and cultural traditions, so as to be tolerant and respectful of difference around them. In my own experience of racial harassment by children during the PhD (see chapter 1 section 1.5), questions were raised about the lack of knowledge and tolerance levels children had of other religions. Additionally, teaching values such as friendship, respect, equality, co-operation, discipline and tolerance, exists amongst all religions and cultures. Therefore, it is a great opportunity for schools to make links between different religions.

It is hoped that faith schools nurture tolerance and teach moral values, however, according to Cohen (2005), it is believed that they are in practice justifying social division and segregation. Smith (2006b) fears that faith schools could damage children's delicate sense of cultural identity. However, it is precisely the process of acknowledging and teaching about various cultures which helps to conceptualise citizenship and national identity. Ignoring such a process, Burtonwood (2000b) believes could create tension, segregation and misunderstanding of the meaningful relationship with the whole society. Riots in

Oldham, Bradford and Burnley in 2001 (see section 3.4) occurred due to social control as there were tensions between a more diverse society and segregating communities. At that time, Estelle Morris (The Secretary of State for Education) announced that “local concerns would be listened to in areas of racial tension” (Smithers, cited in Gillard 2001:1). As a result, the Cattle Report (Cattle, 2001) which focused on community cohesion was published as an immediate response to the riots. The Cattle Report (2001:7) stated that, “contact with other cultures should be a clear requirement for, and development of, the concept of citizenship education from September 2002, and possibly a condition of funding”. However, one must question how this report articulates between diversity and the agenda towards social cohesion. Is it not possible that diversity might undermine cohesion and vice versa? Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005) argued that fostering community cohesion through education policy requires managing broader forms of diversity and teaching about all faith groups in asserting their rights and recognition for fair education. Although the importance of faith or culture in one’s life varies; it is believed that faith schools are to prepare children for life, thus education acknowledging the diversity of cultures and faiths.

The former New Labour government, which focused on faith as an identity and raised the profile and power of religious groups to establish their own faith schools, has led to increasing demands from minority faith groups to have state-funded faith schools. Such a policy (DfES, 2001), treated citizens as ‘faith’ groups, hence could damage community cohesion as they are being specifically labelled. Although De Jong and Snik (2002) indicate that faith schools are an alternative starting point for acquiring individual autonomy, it can be argued that promoting community cohesion and integration which came into effect in September 2007 cannot be achieved in a school where children are brought up in an environment with exclusively one religion and ignoring others. The Education and Inspections Act of 2006 (HMSO, 2006), imposed on all maintained schools in England the duty of promoting community cohesion, which can only be achieved if children at their early age of education are brought up to tolerate other faiths and cultures as well as understanding differences. Such issues bounce the focus back onto whether faith primary schools aid or damage community cohesion.

Although the notion of ‘Britishness’ that constitutes the identity of all citizens of Britain is not rejected (Simon, 1994), it should not be the cause of creating

segregation and social injustice specifically in education. Trevor Phillips argued that a sense of 'Britishness' should be instilled in Britain's black and minority communities in order to create an "integrated society in which people are equal under the law, where there are some common values" (Baldwin and Rozenberg, 2004:5). However, a sense of responsibility, sharing and caring are crucial social components for easing the process of social and cultural integration. Burtonwood (2006) emphasised the importance of fusing such concepts in order to construct and sustain a more inclusive version of 'Britishness'. Platforms for social dialogues should be established through which all citizens can address deep social and cultural issues (Muir and Smith, 2004). The understanding of 'Britishness' among children in faith schools or the teaching of identity should not be the cause of segregation. Smith (2006b) affirmed that elements such as identity, diversity and citizenship are deemed valuable in the curriculum.

Developing the aforementioned concepts would encourage children to develop national identity. This could prove to be a challenge for faith schools as Cush (2003) believes they are yet to overcome obstacles of race. Modood (2005) argues that 'Britishness', if used inadequately, would increase the levels of mistrust and fear, a process which will only deepen the division in communities. In such situations, East and Chan (2008) suggest that cultural, political and educational rectifications are critical in preventing social disturbance. The merit of tolerance is to prevent segregation. Hence, if the current model of faith schooling in England breeds segregation, then division in communities would increase. Indeed, Gokulsing (2006) emphasises that diversity can strengthen and enrich the notion of education if it is based on dynamic social and cultural dialogue (see sections 6.2 and 7.3). Children should be actively engaged in understanding and having tolerance of other faiths as a means to prevent community conflict. It seems that both the educational system and the various communities have done little to translate the differences in cohesion and cultural strength.

### **3.6. School Ethos**

From an educational perspective, Allder (1993) claims that a school's ethos exerts a certain amount of power to direct individuals to think and act in an 'acceptable' manner. Ethos can thus be seen as what individuals within schools are committed to what is deemed natural, proper and right (Torrington and

Weightman, 1989). In this respect, a considerable body of literature including educationalists has identified a link between some kinds of school ethos and school effectiveness and school success (e.g. Halstead and Taylor, 2000; Munn, 2008; Brogan, 2009). For instance, Halstead and Taylor (2000) observe that all elements of ethos are rich in their potential to influence the developing values, attitudes and personal qualities of children and young people. Munn (2008) points out that ethos helps us to understand why we act in particular ways and why our actions can be different in different schools. Brogan (2009) suggests that if schools change their ethos or cultural environment, they may thereby improve pupil and institutional outcomes.

Smith (1998) suggests that a positive ethos can be linked to the development of inclusion, behaviour management, anti-bullying and peer support. On the other hand, Bragg (2011) indicates that 'ethos' can be mobilised in such varied and sometimes conflicting ways, as it remains an indefinable concept that can be filled with meanings to suit different contexts, purposes and speakers. As a result, the ethos also figures in school admissions policies, for instance faith schools can select pupils they consider who will benefit from the school's ethos, or whose parents fully support it – a criterion identified by Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005) as a proxy for social selection based on race and class.

### **3.7. Islamophobia**

Discussing the term Islamophobia whilst examining faith in schools is essential in order to recognise potential consequences. Haque (2004) points out that generally 'phobia' refers to an 'irrational fear'. Islamophobia was defined by the Runnymede Trust (1997:218) as "an outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims". Housee (2012:106) states that Islamophobia is a form of racism where "Islam has and continues to be portrayed as inferior, primitive, violent, irrational, oppressive and undemocratic". According to Gottschalk and Greenberg (2007), Islamophobia connotes a social anxiety about Islam and Muslims. Islam is also seen as static and unresponsive to change. It does not have values in common with other cultures and is not affected or influenced by them (Runnymede Trust, 1997). Thus Islamophobia implies fear mixed with hatred, especially when seeing a Muslim bearded man, a woman wearing a *hijab*, a Mosque or an Islamic centre, hearing Muslims asking for *halal* meals, or requesting few days for celebrating Eid (the Islamic festival).

It can be argued that any form of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hostility is unnatural and unjustified. Genuine disagreement and criticism is permitted if presented in a democratic way. However, it is improper to associate such criticism with discriminatory practices, ethnic or national distinctiveness.

### **3.7.1. Initiation of Islamophobia**

Orhun (2005) argues that Islamophobia is not a new but an age-old phenomenon. According to Allen (2005), Islamophobia was considered an expanding and distinctly pre-9/11 event by the global community many years ago. In 1990, Islamophobia became a common idiom in defining the discrimination faced by Muslims in Europe. Negative perceptions of Islam can be traced back through multiple confrontations between the Muslim world and Europe from the Crusades to colonialism. These confrontations were often phrased in terms of Islamic religion against Christianity (Zine, 2004). There has been evidence of religious discrimination in Britain overlapping with racial discrimination as highlighted in the Home Office Research Study 220 (2001a). Historically, a clash was apparent between the West and what might have been referred to as the Islamic world, in terms of territorial power (Zine, 2004). It is therefore likely that this historical process has moulded the West's perception of Islam into the kind of associations provoked today. However, Islamophobia intensified after the 9/11 attacks in the USA and the bombings of 7/7 in London. In both political and public reactions, there has been an increasing anxiety and uncertainty about how today's society is developing, or what direction it is taking with respect to identity and diversity. According to Orhun (2005), issues of national safety and the questions raised about Muslims in Britain may have created an essential debate regarding identity in general, the makings of citizenship and where the path of multiculturalism is leading.

Islamophobia may be associated with the increased Muslim presence in society and its successes (Muir and Smith, 2004). An increase in governmental changes to legislation affecting Muslims, which have been accompanied by the opening of more Mosques and cultural centres, can be among the causes of increasing hostilities towards Islam and Muslims. According to Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005), the general perception is that the expansion of faith-based schools, instigated by the former New Labour government, will ultimately be an increase in only the number of Muslim schools. This may itself have further fuelled Islamophobia

amongst society and opponents of faith schools. According to Pantazis and Pemberton (2009), people belonging to nationalist wings disliked the increased involvement of government with Muslim leaders. The Green Paper (DfES, 2001) which announced government intention to expand those schools was published in the same month as the terrorist attack in the USA and, together with the riots in Bradford, hatred and hostility were thought to result from communities being segregated by religion and ethnic divisions. MP Tony Wright warned: Before September 11<sup>th</sup>, it looked like a bad idea; it now looks like a mad idea (TES, 2001). The Muslim Council of Britain's assistant secretary general, Dr Faisal Hanjra, said "again it just seems the Muslim community is very much in the spotlight, being treated as part of the problem as opposed to part of the solution" (BBC, 2011).

### **3.7.2. The Media and Islamophobia**

According to Benn and Jawad (2004), the media, as well as political figures, have propagated widespread Islamophobic views where Islam is vilified as a threat to Western security, and Muslims are viewed as backward, bomb-throwing terrorists, irrational extremists and incompatible with British values. An examination of the archives of The Guardian reveals that the term Islamophobia has been used hundreds of times, often by politicians and commentators. Polly Toynbee, a journalist on the Guardian newspaper, once said, "I am an Islamophobe and proud of it" (Press TV, 2011). These sentiments were also echoed by Bruce Anderson of the Independent and Martin Amis of the Times who expressed similar ideas (*ibid*). The media has been criticised by British Muslims for perpetrating Islamophobia, which has resulted in a negative perception of Islam (Said, 1997). It is believed that media reports are disseminating an inaccurate and unjust image of Islamic religion and its adherents (Runnymede Trust, 1997; Poole, 2002). A research study by Moore *et al.* (2008) suggest that media coverage of British Muslims has increased significantly since 2000 and remained at high levels until 2008. This could be due to the increased terrorist attacks related to Muslims which was noticeable after the attacks in the US and UK (*ibid*). Additionally, Housee (2012) believes that the invasion of Iraq, Afghanistan and the 'war on terror,' have also been used to bring Muslims/Muslim identity to the forefront of global media. According to Baker *et al.* (2013) the main coverage of British Muslims, focuses on Muslims as a threat (in relation to terrorism), a problem (in terms of differences in values)



or both (Muslim extremism in general). The language used in the media to describe Muslims reflects the negative or problematic contexts in which they tend to appear (Poole, 2002). According to Moore *et al.* (2008), the most common nouns used in relation to British Muslims were terrorist, extremist, Islamist, suicide bomber and militant, with very few positive nouns (such as 'scholar') used. Interestingly references to radical Muslims outnumber references to moderate Muslims by 17 to one (*ibid*).

Baker *et al.* (2013) suggested that the attacks in both the USA and UK have further intensified discrimination towards Muslims which has become socially acceptable. Sayeeda Warsi, who was a minister of state for faith and communities in the Conservative Party, warned against an increasing trend of 'intolerance' in British society. She stated that, "It has seeped into our society in a way where it is acceptable around dinner to have these conversations where anti-Muslim hatred and bigotry is quite openly discussed" (Press TV, 2011). Therefore, Lander (2014:94) suggests that it is vital for teachers and children to be taught facts and have informed discussions about understanding our multiethnic society "rather than acquiring that understanding from media headlines".

### **3.7.3. Community and Islamophobia**

Islamophobia has resulted in inciting hatred against Islam and creating fear of Muslims, thereby justifying the practises of discrimination and exclusion of Muslims from economic, social, and public life (Benn and Jawad, 2004). Perhaps the fear of Islam and its followers could be seen as the result of limited knowledge about the Islamic faith and the practical reality reflected in day-to-day life. One can argue that the term Islamophobia has rendered all Muslims living in Britain 'suspect', which contributes to fostering a climate of mutual fear. The notion of 'suspect' is defined as a perceived Muslim threat. Therefore, as a positive step towards eliminating discrimination, a framework has been established through the introduction of the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill 11 (Racial and Religious Hatred Bill, 2005), which was issued as an amendment of the Public Order Act of 1998, aimed at protecting persons from acts of religious hatred.

However, Islamophobic actions continued to manifest in violence against Muslims in the form of physical assaults, verbal abuse, and the vandalising of property, especially Mosques, cultural centres and Muslim cemeteries (European Monitoring Centre – EUMC, 2005; 2006). These then lead to forms of behaviour which are discriminatory in the social, political, economic and cultural realms, manifesting itself in several ways – discrimination in employment and exclusion from managerial positions and jobs of high responsibility.

The view of Muslims in relation to Islamophobia, which is linked with “terrorism”, may be causing major negative changes to the lives of Muslims living in different communities in Britain (Runnymede Trust, 1997). Even though as a society we have renounced racism, we still find large sections of the ethnic minority populations being socially excluded (Home Office, 2001b). The key questions arising from Islamophobia are related to public safety, to safeguarding each person’s opportunity to live a life of choice, without diminishing the freedom of others, and to approaches of protecting school environments.

Despite some concern raised about Islamophobia, little research has been done to determine whether such phenomenon has affected Muslim children’s education. Reports by Muir and Smith (2004) and Abbas (2005) revealed the existence of Islamophobia in different public sectors, including education. Allen (2005) mentions ‘visual identifiers’, such as the *hijab* worn by some Muslim women, would have been normal and acceptable were it not for the term ‘Islamophobia’. However, not only the outward appearance of a child, but establishing oneself as belonging to the Islamic faith has become a source of questioning. There can be a direct link between education and the way in which British Muslim children are being accommodated or not in schools and the effects this might have on integration (Bagguley and Hussain, 2005). The dangers of this phobia is that public opinion may invariably be guided and influenced by this kind of picture portrayed on a daily basis, and therefore likely to seep into all sectors; such as schools.

### **3.8. Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter, the relationship between culture and education has been outlined. It has been argued that there is integration between culture and education and that cultural awareness plays a vital role in teaching and learning.

It can be asserted that education for cross-cultural understanding should be designed to provide tolerance, respect and the ability to live alongside groups with different cultural values. Furthermore, faith schools need to define their distinctive character more clearly, if they are to counter the negative criticism attached to these institutions.

According to Short (2002), as long as schools understand the differences between learning about religion and promoting religiosity, then faith schools may contribute to social cohesion. In this context, DCSF (2007) emphasised that community cohesion implies working towards a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds is appreciated and valued. Faith schools can contribute to community cohesion through acknowledging various cultural diversities (Short, 2002), and teaching about other religions (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005) and celebrate various festival (Osler, 2007). Children of ethnic minority origins may not feel valued and respected if the school's dominant faith is taught and nothing is mentioned about other faiths and cultures. As a result, schools are encouraged to viably demonstrate how they will contribute to social cohesion and provide evidence that they are actively promoting an educational process, that is not only relevant to their faiths, but also prepare their pupils for life in a multiethnic and multi-faith world. Similarly, unseen implications of Islamophobia for the youngest members of society in schools may often be overlooked or neglected. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the research, including CRT and Feminist theory.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Critical Race Theory and Feminist theory**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This research emphasises the relationship between faith and school as well as school culture, and how they both relate to children. This chapter discusses social theories: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and feminist theory, and explores their appropriateness to this research, with regards to their contributions to the field of education. In a sense, a combination of issues arise as CRT links to race, ethnicity and gender, which marries together with certain aspects of feminist theory, and very much relates to the introductory semi-autobiography chapter. This chapter then proposes how these theories can be used to provide a structural analysis of the data. CRT and feminist theory are introduced in a way that challenges the chronology of my experience as some of them are retrospective reflections. In order to create a more nuanced and sophisticated reflection, this chapter is not tied by the chronology of my experience.

#### **4.2. Critical Race Theory**

CRT originated in the United States' legal scholarship. According to Gillborn (2008), it has been increasingly adopted by a number of educators and researchers in many parts of the world, (e.g. the UK and Australasia), to analyse the continued practices of racism in educational settings. Hylton (2012) suggested that the growth in published works citing CRT has led to a growth in interest in the UK of practical research projects utilising such framework. Chakrabarty *et al.* (2012:1) affirms the importance of CRT developing in the UK, both in terms of "establishing an academic identity, but also as a means of proving and developing the credentials of an international CRT". Additionally, ethnographers and researchers integrate and interrogate race theories and meanings into their conceptual and methodological lenses in schools and other educational settings (Solorzano, 1997; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn, 2005). More recently, CRT (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002; Ryan and Dixson, 2006; Gillborn, 2008) has proven an important analytic tool in the field of education, offering critical perspectives on race, the causes, consequences and

manifestations of racism, inequity, and the dynamics of power and privilege in schooling. Gillborn, best known for research into race/racism in education in the UK, including ethnographic research on racism in classrooms, has explained the nature of racism in educational policy and practice. Gillborn (2008), points out that CRT offers a systematic and perceptive framework for understanding race inequity in education. Similarly, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) claim that CRT in education is fast changing and can no longer be ignored by schools. Similarly, Gillborn (2009) indicates that CRT is a framework to explore how systems of culture privilege and power are intertwined.

Although there has been an ongoing debate about CRT, including the use of narrative and storytelling (Dixson and Rousseau, 2006), it has an undeniable impact on examining the persistence of racism and power, which has made its way into ethnic studies, political science and education. Discussing CRT in relation to ethnography is significant as it explicates the complicated nature of theories and meanings in educational researches (Ryan and Dixson, 2006). CRT is a framework that can be used to examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact social structures, practices, and discourses (Yosso, 2005). She argues that studies which focus explicitly on cultural and faith exploration and their impacts, have much to contribute to educational research (*ibid*). Similarly, Taylor *et al.* (2009) argue that CRT is particularly helpful in analysing how racial practices are manifested in everyday schools routine.

As a result of the above, and in accordance with the nature of this research, it is beneficial to utilise such a theory as it offers insights and methodological tools to identify faith in school culture and analyse existing evidence of the racial practises in the two schools. The following sections review the concept of CRT and outlining its central tenets/characteristics. It also explores how CRT can contribute to the field of education and how it is used in my research.

#### **4.2.1. An Understanding of CRT**

CRT has developed and evolved through different interpretations which had an impact on shaping it and connecting it with other fields of study (Harris, 2002). According to Hylton (2012), CRT is a framework which supports a researcher to explain issues and isolates realities in a way that other critical theories struggle

with. It expanded to address the elements of race, its role in shaping the law and the nation state, personal and group identity, gender and distribution of goods and services (Tate, 1997). CRT also focused on, with some particularity, the issues of hate crime and hate speech (Gillborn, 2005). Therefore, it has served as an evolving theoretical framework focusing on research, policy, and race.

Crenshaw *et al.* (1995) indicated that CRT emerged as an outgrowth of the critical legal studies movement that took place at the UC-Berkeley and Harvard Law Schools in the early to mid-1980s. In the early 1990s, CRT was a critique of racism in the law and society which was shaped substantially, but not exclusively, by professors, students and scholars of colour in the United States (Bell, 1995; Tate, 1997). According to Carbado and Gulati (2003), such an intellectual movement began to: (a) question the objective nature of the law and the process of settlement in courts, and to (b) criticise the way in which the real effects of the law served to privilege the wealthy and powerful in American society, whilst having a harmful impact on the rights of the poor to use the courts. Historical origins are traced back to Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, who were dissatisfied with the slow pace of racial reform in the US. The late Professor Derrick Bell, as highlighted by Hughes *et al.* (2013), is recognised as the intellectual architect who drafted the blueprints to guide CRT developments. Leonardo and Harris (2013:470) argued that Bell was very passionate about his work that he “willingly sacrificed prestige and financial security for his ideals”.

Both Bell and Freeman aimed to make structures of racism visible by confronting and opposing dominant societal and institutional forces (Gillborn, 2005). Ladson-Billings (2005) examined the ways in which established structures operate as well as how they limit the participation, opportunities, and possibilities of certain groups. Therefore, CRT unmask and exposes racism in its various settings (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). CRTs argued that the law, particularly civil rights law of the 1960s was targeted to combat a type of racism, characterised by acts of, for example; grossly offensive behaviour towards others due to their race, discrimination by public bodies and explicit acts of racial violence (Harris, 2002). Hence, Matsuda (1991) defined CRT as the work of progressive legal scholars of colour, who attempt to examine the role of racism in American law and work towards eliminating racism, as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination.

The roots of CRT can also be traced to previous social science race-based critiques related to the social construction of race and racialism within modernity (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For example, Goldberg (1993) argued that in order to understand modernity and its evolution, one has to understand race, racialism and how race played a fundamental role in shaping philosophical, political and later scientific thought. As a result, and out of this growing critique of the role of law in society, a second strand of critical scholarship emerged through the writings of Derrick Bell, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado, Angela Harris, and Kimberlie Crenshaw (Tate, 1997). Within CRT, various sub-groupings have emerged to focus on issues that relate to class and other social structures (Solorzano *et al.*, 2000; Yosso, 2005). According to Gillborn (2005), CRT challenges traditional ideologies of diversity and existing social hierarchies by establishing how society is organised along racial lines and hierarchies.

Similarly, Dixson and Rousseau (2006) highlight that CRT's tools for conducting research and practice are intended to elucidate contemporary racial phenomena, expand the vocabulary with which to discuss complex racial concepts, and challenge racial hierarchies. These perspectives offer a new and radical way of conceptualising the role of racism, gender and social class as well as cultural diversity and faiths in education (Gillborn, 2005). This theoretical work, coupled with the experiential and situated knowledge of people of colour, makes CRT an appropriate research lens in education for analysing racial inequality in society. The connection between CRT and education serves the dual purpose of providing a race-based interdisciplinary theoretical framework of analysis to the study of education, policies and administrative procedures that have an impact on racial minorities in education settings.

It can be argued that CRT shifts the research lens away from critical legal studies and focuses on selection of social and cultural issues related to marginalised groups that often go unrecognised and unacknowledged. Hence researchers, practitioners and students are still searching for the necessary tools to effectively analyse and challenge the impact of race and racism in modern societies. For example, an interesting recent development in this theory is a questioning of the normative acceptance of 'whiteness' as discussed by Delgado (1995). It looks at how racial pride in being white can manifest in acceptable ways and how it can manifest as 'white superiority' (Crenshaw *et al.*, 1995). Additionally, it may consider what whites can legitimately do to assist the

critical examination of race, without abusing their position of power. Moreover, a new category within CRT explores how certain groups are othered within society (explained in section 4.2.4).

#### **4.2.2. CRT and Education**

Although CRT initially began within the legal profession and was used to critique the law, it has since rapidly spread to many other disciplines. For example; CRT moved into analysing how race and racism was apparent in institutional settings. Carbado and Gulati (2003) view CRT's development as an effective tool in terms of articulating the nuances of racism in a legal theoretical sense, particularly, formal and informal barriers to job entry and law school admission. The next generation of CRT analysis needs to focus on the development of workplace identity and the interactions of class, gender, sexuality and race in forming a unique set of experiences for men and women in the workplace (*ibid*). On the other hand, using CRT was becoming favourable in the field of education. Crenshaw (2002:19) explains that in the late 1980s, "various legal scholars felt limited by work that separated critical theory from conversations about race and racism". They felt the importance of CRT on their understanding of classroom dynamics and curriculum bias. Many (for example; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Delgado, 2001) in the field of education consider themselves CRTs who have used the ideas of CRT to understand issues relating to education and schooling.

As well as qualitative research, CRT can also benefit from the quantitative research process by adding methodological enhancement of the data generated as evidence to demonstrating racial discrimination. This, according to McCarthy and Crichlow (1993), builds on other critical perspectives on race and education, as they too provide more detailed analysis and theoretical perspectives on issues related to representation, identity, discrimination and positive racial struggle for social justice by minority children and communities. For example, findings by Housee (2012:103) highlighted that many educational inequality of ethnic minorities existed which "failed and excluded Black and ethnic minority children in education". Similarly, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) pushed for using CRT in education to deconstruct fundamental assumptions related to race-neutral policies of African-American children and other students of colour. Tate (1997) called for specificity in using CRT and pinpointing it as the tool used to



unmask the effects of racism and how it is utilised in educational institutions. In addition, Solorzano (1997; 1998), looked at using CRT in higher education settings, as a theoretical framework to examine how racism impacts on children of colour. Solorzano (1997) also examined the impact of aggressions in the graduate school setting and its cumulative impact on Chicano-Chicana fellowship students. Other researchers in education have linked CRT to other standpoints to create a more holistic and intersecting framework that incorporates narratives and storytelling of personal/collective memory and experiences to existing research (see section 1.1). For example, Delgado (2002) discussed how CRT could be linked to Chicano/Latino epistemology, in particular, Chicana feminist theory and the use of storytelling to discuss race, gender and nationality related to experiences of Mexicana women in California high schools. Delgado also explored the utility of a Latina family research paradigm which focuses on families as opposed to individuals in qualitative research (*ibid*).

Furthermore, CRTs in education have transformed the way race is understood and addressed in debates over the links between schooling and inequality (see sections 6.2, 6.3 and 7.3). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) claim that CRT in education is fast changing, and thus can no longer be ignored. Yosso (2005) further argues that studies which focus explicitly on cultural and faiths exploration and their impacts, have much to contribute to educational research. It involves a commitment to develop schools that acknowledge multiple strengths of communities, in order to serve a larger purpose of struggle towards social and racial justice (*ibid*). Discussing what CRT is and what it offers educational researchers, Gillborn (2006) affirms that CRT provides coherent approaches to develop critical research in education across a range of areas.

David Gillborn's books and articles (Gillborn, 2005; 2006; 2008; 2009), on the CRT debate in the UK are enlightening on many accounts in the field of education. In particular, they reveal how ethnic minority students face a number of challenges (see sections 1.3 and 1.4). Gillborn (2005) further argues that race inequity may not always be a planned and deliberate goal of education policy, rather it may be accidental. According to Bell (1995), CRT emphasises the significance of viewing policies in their cultural and educational context to deconstruct their racial content (see section 6.4.). As such, through reviewing David Gillborn's arguments, CRT is used to expose race and racism and

ultimately bring more equality to education. However, CRT has been critiqued by Cole (2009) as he questions the use of 'white supremacy'. He argued that such a term homogenises all white people together as being in positions of power and privilege, hence, masking the vast number of poor white people in the UK (*ibid*). However, Gillborn argued that Cole insists on reading 'white supremacy' in simple blanket terms as if CRT viewed all whites as equally privileged and equally powerful (Gillborn, 2009). In defence, Gillborn (2008:34) affirmed "all White-identified people are implicated in these relations but they are not all active in identical ways and they do not all draw similar benefits – but they do all benefit, whether they like it or not". Through education and utilising CRT, Tate (1997) believed that issues of how race, gender, and social class interact and impact on outcomes of ethnic minority children can be explored. Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1998) highlight that CRT can be used to outline why and how schools and teachers reinforce racial, class and gender inequality on ethnic minority children (see chapters 6 and 7), as well as how parents/community respond to race, class, and gender inequality. After discussing the concept of CRT in education, the section below outlines the central tenets relevant to the research.

#### **4.2.3. Central Tenets of CRT**

Gillborn (2009) remarks that CRT is a framework to explore how systems of culture, privilege and power are intertwined (see chapter 1 section 1.2). Such a framework is employed by ethnographers, as well as researchers, to understand and explain their experiences and work towards social change and racial equality (Gillborn, 2005; 2008) indicates that. It can be used to theorise, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures and practices. The use of CRT in research helps in understanding the social and cultural situation, and how society organises itself along racial lines in order to transform it for the better (Delgado, 2001). Dixson and Rousseau (2006) highlight that CRT's tools for conducting research and practice are intended to explain contemporary racial phenomena, expand the vocabulary to discuss complex racial concepts and challenge racial hierarchies. These perspectives offer a new and extreme way of conceptualising the role of racism, gender and social class as well as cultural diversity and faiths in education (Gillborn, 2005).

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Gillborn (2006), CRT has basic tenets which are interdisciplinary and guide its framework. The following tenets have been adapted to suit the research approach and applied accordingly.

**4.2.3.1. Racism is Endemic:** CRT asserts that racism is not an abnormal experience, but an everyday occurrence for people of colour and is tightly woven into the fabric of the society. Gillborn (2008) argues that racism is embedded in everyday practices, events, policy rules and administrative procedures in restrained and often unnoticed ways. Furthermore, Khalifa *et al.* (2013) acknowledge that racism is an invisible norm and the white culture is the standard by which other races are measured. Given this endemic nature, CRT suggests that the functions and effects of racism are often not obvious to people with racial privileges (see sections 6.3 and 6.5). Thus, race should be seen as a central rather than a marginal force that defines and explains human experiences (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). In terms of education, racism through CRT is discussed by Ladson-Billings (1998) to analyse the impact of racism in school, policy and curriculum. For example; Solorzano (1998) applied CRT to challenge the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to education. He examined how educational theory, policies and practice were used to subordinate certain racial/ethnic groups (*ibid*).

**4.2.3.2. The Critique of Liberalism:** Liberalism (tolerance) is defined by its belief in the individual and their equality; therefore social problems can be solved through negotiation (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). CRT attacks this so called liberalism and the inherent belief in the law to create an equitable just society. Ideologies that maintain white privilege are a central focus of CRT's critique of liberalism (see chapter 7 section 7.2). Moreover, it refutes the claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, colour-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity. According to Khalifa *et al.* (2013:494), colour-blindness is an essential insight of CRT theorists as "its truth allows for us to understand the other aspects of CRT, and in fact, the theory as a whole". CRT further challenges notions of 'neutral' research or 'objective' researchers and exposes deficit-informed research that silences, ignores and distorts rights of ethnic minorities (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

**4.2.3.3. The Intersectionality Perspective:** Although CRT highlights the role of race in the oppression of people; it does not negate other forms of oppression.

Crenshaw (1989, 1993) discusses the variables that help to shape one's behaviour and access to opportunities, such as; religion, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, resident status (see 7.2 and 7.4.2). In addition, Delgado (1992) and Harris (1994) explain that CRT draws on scholarship from ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film, theatre and other fields.

**4.2.3.4. Dominance:** According to Bell (1995), oppression and needs of the ethnic minority people are overlooked, unless it converges with the interests of the dominant group, i.e. whites. Bell (2006) reiterates this point by emphasising that those in the dominant culture would only support social, political, and economic changes on behalf of ethnic minorities, if their own self-interest is better served (see section 1.2). This tenet reveals the hidden power imbalances whereby the current system of white dominates ethnic minorities in serving their own important purposes. Gillborn (2005) argues that 'white supremacy' is now mainstream; therefore, it explores the concept of race in society, whereby white members share a higher status than the ethnic minorities (see section 7.4). Moreover, Ladson-Billings and Tate, (1995) emphasise that the term 'white' is used to criticise the socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of white identifications and interests, in other words, white dominance.

According to Gillborn (2005) conceptualisation of white supremacy goes beyond the usual narrow focus on extreme and explicitly racist organisations, rather, it focuses on a more extensive, more powerful version of white supremacy; one that is normalised and taken for granted. Similarly, Gillborn (2005:10) stated "White supremacy is a term usually reserved for individuals, organisations and/or philosophies that are overtly and self-consciously racist in the most crude and obvious way". CRT is often accused of pessimism, however, its recognition of white supremacy is intended to advance and inform the struggle for greater equity, not to detract from it. Delgado and Stefancic (2001:13) asked: "is [CRT] optimistic, because it believes that race is a social construction? And if CRT does have a dark side, what follows from that? Is medicine pessimistic because it focuses on diseases and traumas?"

One key focus of CRT is the regime of white supremacy and privilege maintained despite the rule of law and the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws. It proposes that white supremacy and racial power are

maintained over time and in particular, that the law may play a role in this process (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Dixson and Rousseau (2006) suggested that accounts of white supremacy are at the heart of the analysis of racism introduced in Derrick Bell's works. CRT identifies that power structures are based on white supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalisation of people of colour. Thus victims of racism begin to believe the ideology that they are inferior and white people and white cultures are superior (Gillborn, 2005).

**4.2.3.5. Significance of Experiential Knowledge:** Hylton (2012:27) asserts that race, class, gender and ethnic minorities are routinely excluded from the historical accounts given by dominant groups and from "important social and political developments in knowledge". CRT suggests that this is an attempt by the dominant group to justify and legitimise its power (Gillborn, 2006). As such, new approaches must be developed to capture and incorporate ethnic minority's experiences. CRT, therefore, grounds its conceptual framework on the lived experiences of ethnic minority people by including methods such as counter-stories, biographies and narratives (Delgado, 1989; Hylton, 2012). According to Warmington (2012:6), counter-story work through the "assertion of agency, voice and history". CRT asserts that minorities are best able to articulate the meaning of race and racism as they have experienced oppression and such experiences are insightful and legitimate (see chapters 6 and 7).

As a way of challenging oppression, Ladson-Billings (2005) emphasises that experiences, as well as stories of people, are used to explore cultural/racial myths and assumptions. In this respect, Gillborn, (2008:22) states, "the voice of people is required for a complete analysis of the educational system". Therefore, Delgado (1989) highlights that experiential knowledge allows us to see the world through other's eyes and enrich our reality. For example, Warmington (2012) uses a counter-story connecting with the voices of black people which are usually invisible in discourses relating to race and racism. It is important to note that, in this research, this particular tenet is not only linked to one theme or subtheme of my data, on the contrary, it is a running tenet throughout the whole thesis starting with my semi-autobiography and my life story. This tenet was further apparent in my school observations and conversations with teachers, bilingual staff and children.

#### **4.2.4 The concept of ‘Othered’**

An interesting development in CRT is the concept of being othered, which according to Dixson and Rousseau (2006) and Yosso (2006) implies those that are thought to be different from the mainstream, specifically, ethnic minorities. Areas populated with ethnic minorities have promoted a new form of racism by othering the non-white people (*ibid*). The concept of othering is present in CRT’s tenet for example; in dominance, the racist hierarchical structure allocates the privileging of whites and the subsequent othering of people of colour in all arenas, including education (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004). Similarly in the tenet of experiential knowledge (*ibid*) argued that by telling stories in their own words, ethnic minorities will have the chance to shed light on the othering process, and, thus, challenge the privileged discourses that are often found in schools. Furthermore, as CRT critiques liberalism, the notion of colour-blindness fails to take into consideration the persistence and permanence of racism and the construction of people of colour as other (Khalifa *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, according to Ladson-Billings (1998) and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) it is imperative that educational researchers provide analytical tools for the critical exposure of race and racism that serves as a source of othering marginalised individuals, and CRT is such a tool.

CRT in education refutes dominant ideology while voicing the experiences of the ethnic minority. Using its tenets, this research explores where and how they impact on data analysis. It is believed that employing CRT and understanding its implications can provide a helpful guiding lens, which would work towards creating and encouraging passion and commitment to school success for children’s learning (Gillborn, 2005). CRT would provide a theoretical framework to enhance teachers’ awareness of race and racism and build tolerance amongst children. It is a tool to initiate dialogue, debate and political struggle, and to challenge uncritical ways of thinking about social inequality. It offers a new lens with which to examine education, beliefs and assumptions about factors and practices that contribute to school failure or success.

#### **4.3. Feminist Theory**

Feminism and women’s empowerment has gradually gathered popularity in democratisation and society in many parts of the world (Carby, 1989; Tohidi,

2003). The debate varies from country to country and society to society. Whilst in Europe, women have a longer history of deliverance and according to Rhys (2007); women's suffrage from deprivation of social, legal, political, educational and civil rights still exists. According to Strobel and Davenport (1999), feminist theorists struggle to communicate their dream, as they have hope for better futures for women and for all. It embraces the vision of peace and end of racism/class exploitation (Collins, 1991). Feminist research has produced a significant output that has provided guidelines for policies central to modern societies (Collins, 1991; Stanley and Wise, 1993). There are several schools of thoughts within feminist theory, but all share a common goal, they look at the differences in society between men and women and try to see how these problems could be solved. Moreover, according to Strobel and Davenport (1999), feminist theorists continue to pay attention to gender, particularly in education.

Feminist theory deserves its place in this research, not only due to the quality of the output it produces, but also due to the research focus, findings and the researcher's position. It has been applied here to explore incidents in schools which related to gender inequality. The ethnography is conducted by a female researcher who is guided by feminist theory. In this section, the theoretical foundations of feminist theory are addressed and its nature and diversity are discussed. Through reviewing feminist theory, I gained a more productive understanding of the educational system and data analysis. Feminist theory encompasses: liberal, socialist, radical, postmodern, multicultural and Islamic feminism. Seeking to analyse aspects in relation to women which are useful for feminist practice, it can be argued that such theoretical perspectives are useful in this research since it is concerned with ethnic minority women experiencing discrimination.

Liberal feminists emphasise inequality between men and women in the public fields of life - employment, education and politics. According to Weedon (1999), liberal feminists are concerned with attaining economic and political equality for women. Hence, challenging ideas and practices that exclude women and prevent them from operating effectively in the public fields on equal terms with men (Friedan, 1963; Yamani, 2011). According to Yamani (2011) Muslim women have long been oppressed by men and the patriarchal society and believes that women dressed in a *hijab* and a long dress as and a violation of

women's liberty. Welch (2001) clarified that the term 'patriarchy' is often used to describe the oppression faced by women and focuses on men as the main cause of the oppression. Liberal feminists believe that the best way to fight patriarchal systems is by establishing legislation to fight discrimination. For example; the right for some women to vote in 1918 and finally all women to vote in 1928 were liberal feminist approaches (Tong, 1998). This school of thought believes women would achieve better equality if they were more visible in the current social structure. However, Welch (2001) claimed that liberal feminists have left unchallenged other areas such as patriarchy or sexuality and any other fundamental structures of society.

Socialist feminists focus on challenging male dominance (Welch, 2001) and believe that it is the gendered division of labour that contributes to women's inequality. In the views of socialist feminists women do experience a common oppression due to division of class, colour and political belief (Strobel and Davenport, 1999). The fact that men have historically been paid more and obtain higher positions in organisations, etc., plays a big part (Eisenstein, 1979). A socialist feminist would point out the fact that the majority of people who stay at home to raise children and take care of the home are women (Strobel and Davenport, 1999). Therefore, Gilman (1980) believes that women's role as mothers is the source of women's exclusion from the public sphere. In order to liberate women from the conditions of work as a mother and housekeeper, (*ibid*) encouraged the hiring of professional babysitters and housekeepers.

With regards to liberal and socialist feminist, I would argued that women do have an important role in society even if they are at home and not physically visible in public. Looking after children and bringing up the new generation is a huge responsibility and further signifies a woman's role. From an Islamic point of view, an influential Islamic scholar, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (2002), who has been a long-time supporter of elevating the rights of women, emphasises that women are praised for being at home and looking after children. However, he emphasises that Islam does not force or prevent women from getting educated or acquiring a career (*ibid*) (see section 1.5). Therefore, I challenge such feminisms due to the perception that it promotes the individual over the family, and by extension the Muslim community. I would not fit very well with socialist feminists (Strobel and Davenport, 1999) as my upbringing has instilled in me the importance of family, and specifically the need for women to prioritise their schedule around their



children. Similarly, the fact that women are at home should not be analysed as oppression, just as Muslim women who wear the *hijab* does not indicate violation of their liberty. According to Mouffe (2005), to take seriously the ethical principle of liberalism is to assert that individuals should have the possibility of organising their lives as they wish, of choosing their own ends, and of realising them as they think best. Although espouses liberty and equality for all, Mouffe (2005:31) acknowledges that “there will always be disagreement concerning their meaning and the way they should be implemented”.

Radical feminist clearly state that the basic division in all societies is due to men who are oppressors of women (Echols, 1989). In her radical views of feminism Hooks (2000) explains that feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. Underlining the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, she views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power primarily by gender, and as a result oppressing women and privileging men (*ibid*). This implies that radical feminists strive for sexual equality via political and legal reform (Federici, 2011) aiming to challenge patriarchy by opposing male dominance and oppression of women calling for a radical reordering of society.

Postmodern feminists. Based on psychoanalysis, and the deconstruction theory of Freud and Derrida, postmodern feminists claim that the purpose of the liberation of women is not for them to become equal to men, but rather to admit to the different identities of man and woman (Butler, 1990). According to Ratliff (2006) they criticises the conflation of sex and gender, about men and women, and the tendency to view gender as fixed and determined at birth, rather than a fluid, mobile construct that allows for multiple gender expressions. This type of feminism rejects the dualistic view of gender and biological determinism, pointing to the inseparability of the body from language and social norms (Frug, 1992). Therefore, postmodern feminism is often associated with the work of Butler (1990) and is marked, in part, by a ‘linguistic turn’, a view of gender as a discursive construction and performance rather than a biological fact. She rejects binary structure or dualism, believing that the gender configurations are presupposed and predetermined by a hegemonic cultural discourse (*ibid*). Gender is a term that is used by (Ebert, 1991) to mean ‘culturally constructed sex’ in contrast to a ‘biological sex’. However, Butler (1990) suggests that not only gender, but also sex is socially constructed. Furthermore, Frug (1992)

states that human experience is constructed within language, thus implying that language shapes and restricts human reality. Power for example is influenced by language and so is political actions (*ibid*).

Butler (1990) further argues that the law is imposed by culture, and feminine and masculine dispositions are produced effects of law. Moreover, postmodern feminists argue against the assumption that all women share a common oppression; this assumption, according to Ebert, (1991), has unwittingly totalised and naturalised the category of 'woman' into a white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied, young- to middle-aged norm.

Moreover, Multicultural feminists argue that traditional feminists have been created by middle-class white women, neglecting that women of multiethnic origins may also be oppressed based on racial inequalities (Ponzanesi, 2007). Multicultural feminism focuses on the nature of race in contemporary U.S. society, while at the same time acknowledging how race, class, gender and sexuality both shapes and is shaped by social relations (Zinn and Dill, 1996). Ponzanesi (2007) believes that multicultural feminism is a means of making important interventions for both feminist theories and multicultural debates, in order to work across national borders and disciplinary backgrounds. Bryant (2007) argues that for the success of global feminism, diversity is crucial. Appreciation for ideological, cultural, racial, sexual, and class diversity is critical for local and global feminist movements (Ponzanesi, 2007). Although in agreement with multicultural feminism, as oppression could be due to both gender and race, it is argued that multiculturalism should not be the only drive for women's rights. It is true that cultures are important and play a significant role on the individual and in society; however, I believe that faith should be the main drive of feminist theory (see section 1.2).

Islamic feminists focuses on the role of women in Islam. It is aimed at all Muslims, regardless of gender, in public and private life to be treated equally and can include non-Muslims in the discourse and debate (Hussain, 2007). Islamic feminism was first used in a modern context by Iranian scholars Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Afsaneh Najmabadeh in 1992 and popularised by a Saudi researcher Mai Yamani in her book 'Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives' in 1996 (Wagner, 2011). Islamic feminism appeared at the time of an accelerating Islamist movement (Mir-Hosseini, 1996; 2006). She argued that

the Iranian state, perhaps unintentionally, created new spaces for debates regarding women's rights (*ibid*). Soon, the emergence of Islamic feminist voices in Iran was regarded as the unwanted child, (Mir-Hosseini, 2004). According to Tonnessen (2014) and Mir-Hosseini (2011), Islamic feminists advocate women's rights, gender equality, and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework. Advocates of this movement, as suggested by Hussain (2007), seek to highlight the deeply rooted teachings of equality in the religion. Badran (2002) affirms that Islamic feminism encourages a questioning of the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic teaching through the Quran, *hadith* (sayings of the prophet Mohammed) and *sharia* (law) towards the creation of a more equal and just society. In recent times the concept of Islamic feminism has grown further, with Islamic groups looking to garner support from as many aspects of society as possible and educated Muslim women striving to articulate their role in society (Wagner, 2011).

Hussain (2007) and Tonnessen (2014) recognise that for a religious feminism to be integrated, they need to contribute to the empowerment of women, tolerance and cultural acceptance. According to Ahmed (1992), Islamic feminism is a negotiation and acceptance of modernity which emerged first in the west. Although rooted in Islam, this feminism has also utilised secular and Western discourses as a means of integrating it into the global feminist movement (Badran, 2002). However, one questions the justifications for including western concepts as it would oppose Islamic principles and beliefs. Due to the need of integrating and being accepted by society, it appears that Islamic feminism deviated from the Islamic framework through incorporating contradictory thoughts to the faith. According to Al-Faruqi (1983), whilst some Muslim women, especially those who studied in the US, Canada and the UK, marvel at the freedoms that the West has to offer, they say Western feminism is an abomination as it is perceived as a threat to Islamic societies (see section 1.2). Tohidi (2003) believes that feminism, as defined by Western standards, has such negative connotations that the word itself severely hampers any progress to galvanise women to develop a movement. I believe that a suitable feminist framework does not have to find connections or a balance between Islamic feminism and the west. Simply, if Islam is followed correctly it would provide women with their full rights. The key challenge lies in disentangling cultural traditions from the actual tenets of Islam. Many of the restrictions placed on women in the name of Islam come from primitive beliefs and cultural traditions

not supported by the Quran (Tonnessen, 2014). For example; the controversial issue of arranged marriages is unfortunately always connected to Islam, yet it is not supported by Islam, rather it is a common tradition amongst some cultures.

#### **4.4. On Being a Muslim Researcher in *Hijab***

Feminism is a movement, which according to Yamani (2011) is most active in the *hijab* debate. Despite the various international conventions regarding women's rights (Wagner, 2011; Tonnessen, 2014), Muslim women in a *hijab* are still unfairly treated in different contexts. Roded (2008) indicates that many non-Muslims assume that the *hijab* encapsulates Islam's inherent violation of women's equal rights. Similarly, the *hijab* is often associated with fundamentalism which leads many non-Muslims to think of it as a threat to their culture (Rhys, 2007). Women in a *hijab* often face various cultural, political and social restrictions (see sections 6.4 and 7.4). Mouffe (2007) argues that, as various ethnic minorities have been marginalised, it sheds light on society's commitment to the values of liberalism. Although appearance, gender and ethnicity, mainly being a Muslim researcher in a *hijab*, created some challenges and impacted on the process of the PhD (paper presented at the Discourse Power Resistance conference at Greenwich University, 2010), it has given the researcher the courage to fulfil tasks and complete the research (see section 5.5).

The debate between Islamic feminists and secular feminists still exists. Al-Faruqi (1983) claims that liberation for men and women lies in following the Islamic faith, and it is Islam that provides the best protection for women. Secular feminists argue for the separation of religion from civil society and the state (Rhys, 2007). It is in this background that during the past two decades, a reform-oriented religious feminism-known as Islamic feminism (see section 4.3) has grown among Muslim women in different societies. Tohidi (2002) argues that women in a *hijab* are still facing the same problems that they have been addressing for the last years. Facing such obstacles is against the ideology of feminism which operates on equal values and principles. According to Van Dijk (2000), western societies have adopted a 'new racism' which is a system of ethnic inequality. This particular point ties with CRT which has expanded to incorporate women's experiences of racism (Delgado, 1989). Ethnic minority women have praised CRT for addressing feminist critiques of racism (see

section 4.2.3.3). Van Dijk (2000) further argues that the media, in particular, negatively portray the 'other', namely ethnic minorities thus disseminating negative stereotypes and prejudices against minority groups (see chapter 3 section 3.7.2). The concept of othered (section 4.2.4) has also been explored and utilised in CRT to describe treatments of ethnic minority people. However, Mouffe (2007) sees the presence of conflicting opinions as a force in society which shapes diversity. She celebrates the generalisation of liberal democracy as bringing progress for all people worldwide (Mouffe, 2005).

#### **4.5. Concluding Remarks**

This chapter examines the theoretical framework for data analysis. It explores CRT and feminist theory with being a Muslim researcher in *hijab*. CRT asserts that analysis has to be designed to expose hidden power imbalances and enlighten agents about how they ought to rationally act to realise their own interests. The interface of CRT with feminism aims to identify connections between individuals, faith and society. Feminist theory is distinguished in that it focuses on equal opportunities for women and being free from oppressions of society. Nevertheless, the basic principle of CRT and feminist theories together is to free individuals from oppressions not only related to gender, but also race, appearance, class and sexuality. CRT and feminism contend that the perspectives of the discriminated-against, oppressed individual or group must be better understood by the larger society to help those who have been victims of discrimination. In other words, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Ponzanesi (2007) insist that the representatives of society must understand the experiences and responses of people who are regularly mistreated due to their race.

Although I was not aware of CRT and feminist theories at the start of the PhD, discussions between my supervisors and I took place after the initial pilot study on considering the two theories for the research. I have used CRT and feminist theory from the very start of this thesis to rationalise and analyse my lived experiences. The theories were also used in the literature review chapters to help theorise the policy and politics of certain events in education. This chapter is further significant for the rest of the thesis as it provides a framework to analysis the data generated in the two schools and strengthen the discussions.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Ethnography**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter explores views and issues in relation to the phenomena under study, and is partly chronological, as it conveys an assemblance of experience through time. It also references aspects of CRT and feminist theory. This chapter explains the research design and describes data generation procedures including design and administration of instruments through the fieldwork process. It also discusses the stages regarding the construction of interview questions. To make intellectual sense of the initial pilot study, which was conducted in St. Michael Roman Catholic Primary school, this chapter further links my experience to the literature, which covers a thorough discussion of the ethnographic approach. The constraints impinging on the fieldwork procedures are discussed. Finally, the sampling framework, data analysis approach, trustworthiness of the research and the ethical considerations are addressed.

### **5.2. Introducing the Research Paradigms**

The choice of a workable paradigm is central to any research inquiry. Paradigm can be defined as the world view or the belief system that guides researchers in studying educational phenomenon (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It constitutes a way of looking at the world, interpreting what is seen, and deciding which of the things seen by researchers are real and important enough to be documented (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Patton (1990) argued that the paradigm is an important theoretical construct for illuminating fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality based on the ontological, epistemological and methodological positions related to the research undertaken. Similarly, Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that the basic beliefs that define a particular research paradigm can be summarised by the responses given to three fundamental questions:

- The ontological question: What is the nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?

- The epistemological question: what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known?
- The methodological question: how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever he/she believes can be known?

Generally, there are three broad paradigms: positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Grix, 2004; Cohen *et al.*, 2007) in social and human sciences. The first is known as scientific, quantitative, confirmatory, hypothesis testing or a predictive paradigm, whereas the other two paradigms are known as exploratory, hypothesis grounded, descriptive, qualitative, interpretative, non-positivist or naturalistic paradigms (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The positivist paradigm, which derives from the natural sciences (Ernest, 1994), is based on a realist, foundation list ontology which views the social reality as existing independently of our knowledge of it (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Positivists believe there are no qualitative differences between the natural and the social world and there are general and universal laws that govern individuals' social behaviour. Therefore, they employ scientific methods to analyse the social world. This positivist-scientific approach has dominated research in the field of education in the 1950s and it is still one of the major approaches used in research today. Also, this approach reflects the traditional scientific approach to problem solving by assuming that there is a single reality that can be broken down into variables. Additionally, there is too much emphasis in this approach upon measurement, comparison and objectivity (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). In terms of methodology and methods employed in research, experiments and quantitative predetermined questionnaires, grids or instruments are the most common.

On the contrary, the interpretive paradigm gained recognition and popularity in the 1980s and is acknowledged today as an appropriate way of conducting research (Grix, 2004). It has unique aims and philosophical assumptions that guide researchers who apply it in their investigations. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the interpretative paradigm and the critical paradigm reject many of the ideas of positivism. However, unlike the interpretative paradigm, the critical paradigm attempts to be less subjective and relative (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The critical paradigm rejects positivism for not focusing enough on people's real meanings, thoughts, and feelings, for ignoring the social context, for being anti-humanist and for assuming that the social order is stable and unchanging (*ibid*).

Additionally, it rejects interpretative paradigm as subjective and relativist and also aims to uncover what is on the surface so that people can positively transform aspects of their social context. The aim is usually to bring about change (Grix, 2004). This research is based on the interpretive paradigm and an overview of the basic assumptions of this approach will be discussed before outlining how it was adopted in the study.

### **5.2.1. The Interpretive Paradigm**

Schwandt (2000) explained that an interpretive research is concerned mainly with meaning and seeks to understand social members' definition of a situation. Also, interpretivists share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who lived it. Researchers try to elicit a comprehensive understanding of how participants in a given investigation view their world, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

The ontological assumption underpinning the interpretive paradigm is the ontological position that suggests the existence of multiple realities within the social world. These realities are perceived as constructions existing in the minds of people as they are a product of the people's consciousness and a result of their cognition, influenced by the social environment and the culture in which they find themselves (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Reality is not an objective entity. Rather, it is subjective, inter-subjective and relative. It is not given, rather, it is created (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Also, reality is multi-layered and complex and cannot be reduced to quantifiable figures and simple amounts of data figures (Crotty, 2003; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994), these realities are intangible, contextually bound, complex and subjective in nature and can only be studied in a holistic and idiosyncratic manner. Therefore, the aim is to deepen and extend our knowledge of why social life is perceived and experienced in the way that it is (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). In this research, I examined how participants' realities were constructed in the context of faith in school and their broad culture. This enabled a better understanding of how faith is manifested in two schools.

Epistemology is defined by Crotty (2003:8) as "a philosophical grounding for deciding what kind of knowledge are possible and how can we ensure that they



are both adequate and legitimate”. Interpretive paradigm highlights that participants construct their own knowledge of the situation. Participants have their own unique interpretation of event and the world cannot be known with any certainty (Ernest, 1994). When talking about understanding others on the level of meaning, it is referring to our interpretations of what we see and hear; and through our language we are capable of reconstructing experiences (*ibid*). Additionally, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argued that in order to gain a better understanding of the epistemological assumptions that guide researchers in educational and social research, two main issues surrounding the debate of epistemology should be addressed. The first is associated with the relationship between the researcher and the researched world. While the positivist or scientific adherents view this relationship as isolated or “value free”, the proponents of interpretive paradigm believe that this process is an interactive process; knowledge is either mediated through the researcher or is a result of negotiation and agreement between researchers and participants (Crotty, 2003). The second issue is related to the way in which knowledge is acquired. A scientific approach is often seen as a deductive approach whereby propositions or hypotheses are reached theoretically through logical processes. On the other hand, knowledge in interpretive research is often obtained through induction processes by looking for patterns, themes and associated matters derived from observations of the participants.

Finally, Ernest (1994:4) defined methodological/methodology as “the theory whose methods and techniques are appropriate to generate and justify knowledge”. Unlike positivistic research, the interpretive mode is concerned more with the abstract characteristics of events. Data is generated in a natural setting. Therefore, it is not possible to go into the field of inquiry with a tight research design (*ibid*) as this might delude researchers to see only what they want or expect to see. The interpretive paradigm aims at discovering the meanings of the individuals involved in a given social situation. This leads to the adoption of research methods that yield qualitative rather than quantitative data. Therefore, interpretive research is derived from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people and its emphasis on words rather than numbers (Maxwell, 1996).

Regarding the research methods, the interpretive paradigm generally employs interviews, participant observation, journals, open ended surveys, etc. The

researcher is the primary data generating instrument but not the only one. The researcher is capable of recognising, sorting and distinguishing and dealing with the information obtained in a way leading to encompassing the emotions, values, beliefs and assumptions of individuals in a social context (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Events are understood adequately when they are seen in context. Such a role for the researcher in the interpretive method is open to criticism of subjectivity. However, as long as the researcher acknowledges his/her subjectivity, this is not necessarily a weakness (Pring, 2000; Crotty, 2003). The study of phenomena in their natural setting is vital to the justification of an interpretivist philosophy (Cohen *et al.*, 2007) and the methods, which are then employed. By exploring these individual contexts, research within an interpretive framework most commonly involves an intensely interactive and personal process of engagement (Sparkes, 1994), which the methods of this research reflect. This is most effectively achieved through methods which afford the opportunity to watch, listen, empathise, learn about perspectives, make sense of experiences, and share understanding of meaningful interpretations. Hence, aspects of ethnography were helpful to this research design. Furthermore, the interpretative approach in this research carries the potential of deepening our understanding of the complexities of faith in school and provides directions for change or continuity of provision as appropriate.

Taking into account the above argument about the complexity of how faith is manifested in school and in view of research aims, the interpretive orientation of qualitative research appeared to be an appropriate choice. The aim in the interpretive research is to understand actualities, social realities, and participants' perceptions. Rather than providing generalised guesses on human phenomena, the aim is to uncover the many issues related to the research questions through observations, interviews and documentations to represent as closely as possible how participants feel, what they know, and their concerns, beliefs, perceptions and understandings. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm has, as each defining characteristic, a commitment to seeking to understand the phenomenon being studied in the light of the explanations and perceptions of those involved. In the same direction, the interpretive approach helps the researcher explain why things happened from the insider's point of view (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This approach has been used as it explores participants' perceptions of faith and the importance of faith and school ethos on schools' culture. Therefore, the interpretative approach is used here for understanding

the context within which the participants act, and for understanding the process by which events and actions take place (Maxwell, 1996). As Pring (2000:47) argues, “what is reached is to be understood only within the context with which, and through which, it has been constructed”.

As an interpretive researcher, the purpose of the study is to construct knowledge by describing and interpreting the phenomena of the schools under study. It may offer possibilities, but not certainties of the outcomes of future events (Merriam, 1998). The element of generalisability of findings to a wider context has never been a goal of interpretive inquiry. However, the in-depth nature of the inquiry means that the findings give insightful explanations of a phenomenon, which could be useful to other people in similar situations (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993; Lichtman, 2006). Furthermore, this is a qualitative study grounded in interpretive philosophical assumptions which looks for culturally derived and socially situated interpretations of the social world (Crotty, 2003). Although faith schools have been attracting a considerable amount of attention from within and outside the field of education (Johnson, 2005), I became fascinated with this topic as evidence on the performance benefits of faith schools is fairly limited. In the UK, most of the research conducted to examine the impact of faith schools on education has focused on secondary faith schools (Bhatti, 1999; Schagen *et al.*, 2002). Crucial questions raised have been focused on whether faith-based schools simply attract families of religious backgrounds, or whether faith schools have an exclusive and discriminatory administering system (Johnson, 2005; Marples, 2005; Gibbons and Silva, 2006). The section below provides the justification for adopting a qualitative approach.

### **5.2.2. Adopting the Qualitative Approach**

This research is qualitatively based due to data analysis being heavily based on observations as well as teachers’ and children’s responses and interviews. A qualitative approach describes, either explicitly or implicitly, the purpose of the qualitative research, the role of the researcher(s), the stages of research, and the method of data analysis. In reviewing the literature, various methods are required to elicit tacitly held attitudes and beliefs to provide an environment in which participants will be encouraged to reflect on and articulate their views. Reflecting on the nature of the research questions, the research proposes a qualitative approach to answer these questions. A qualitative approach focuses

on understanding rather than generalising and involves the use of small samples that are often selected for a specific purpose. The use of participants to gain a real understanding of their social worlds will provide important data on the topic of interest (Creswell, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

Within the context of this research, and according to Punch (1998), the approach used in this research depends on what the researcher is attempting to discover or examine. This research is a qualitative study grounded in interpretive philosophy, where it will look for interpretations of the social world (Crotty, 2003). This implies that participants were able to provide useful information from their experiences about influence of faith on school, school culture and children's behaviour. This research used qualitative method which is recognised to have a long history, especially in the field of education (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative methods have witnessed an exceptional rise in their popularity, attracting the attention of a great number of researchers in education and other fields of studies (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). As a result, qualitative methods employed in this research were flexible and more open-ended. Knowledge gained from interviews in combination with participant observations and documentations at two schools, informed the architecture of the findings and which were crucial when assessing the nature and scope of the research questions. This is based on the fact that such combinations of data in a single study, as suggest by Creswell (2003), would help to elucidate various aspects of the phenomenon under investigation, providing a more holistic understanding of it, and resulting in better-informed education policies. Moreover, using interviews accompanied by observation and documentations were useful in obtaining further explanations about the phenomenon being studied, instead of relying solely on a limited singular perspective (Robson, 2002; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

A qualitative method generally employs interviews, participant observation, journals, open ended surveys, etc. According to Angrosino (2007), such method is usually recognised as being flexible, open-ended, semi-structured and with no pre-fixed arrangements. Thus, in the context of this research, White and Gunstone (1992:101) note that school headteachers, teachers and children are understood to be "meaning-making organisms, theory builders who develop hypotheses, notice patterns, and construct theories of action from their life experience". Similarly, Pring (2000:47) argues, "what is reached is to be understood only within the context with which, and through which, it has been

constructed". Hence qualitative research is committed to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who lived it. In this respect, Rubin and Rubin (1995) noted that researchers using qualitative method try to elicit a comprehensive understanding of how participants in a given environment view their world, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed. This led to the adoption of research methods that yield qualitative rather than quantitative data.

Before looking in detail at various aspects of ethnographic research and methods, careful consideration has been given to the concept of reflexivity and its relationship to ethnographic research. Therefore, a brief review of this is discussed below.

### **5.3. On the Concept of Reflexivity**

Reflexivity as a positive aspect of ethnography has been growing among anthropologists who promoted the method of participant observation (Urry, 1984). Commitment of the ethnographers is to act ethically on the basis of the knowledge accumulated and to seek knowledge that is relevant to the issue under study. Hence, the production of an ethnographic texts could be viewed as the production of a highly reflexive (Jacobson, 1991), through employing extensive use of transcripts of recordings.

For decades, the tradition among ethnographers has been to assume the role of objective fieldworkers who sustain some level of social distance while, at the same time, fostering interpersonal rapport in their relations with participants in order to elicit rich cultural data (Fetterman, 2010). Traditional roles and relations were challenged in the 1980s by feminists, critical ethnographers, and others who expressed concerns about how the "bracketing of researcher's world" made participants vulnerable to exploitation and other questionable practices (Fine *et al.*, 2000:108). The current trend among ethnographers, as suggested by Tedlock (2000:471), is to carefully critique their own approaches with the recognition that fieldwork experiences "are different for each individual, as well as for each culture [they] come into contact with as field-workers". Reflexivity is not a single phenomenon but assumes a variety of forms that affect the research process through all its stages. It is helpful to follow this process through by reviewing briefly the various levels of reflexivity and the ways in which they

influence social research. In its most transparent pretext, reflexivity expresses researchers' awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it (Woolgar, 1988; Gergen and Gergen, 1991).

### **5.3.1. Reflexivity and Ethnographic Research**

In doing research of any kind, there is an implicit assumption that we are investigating something 'outside' ourselves, that the knowledge we seek cannot be gained solely or simply through introspection. This implies the impracticality of researching something with which the researchers have no contact. All researchers are to some degree connected to, (or a part of), the object of their research. Depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of research are artefacts of the researcher's presence and inevitable influence on the research process. For these reasons, considerations of reflexivity are important for all forms of research. Even in the realm of particle physics, questions about the effects of observers on their observations are of fundamental importance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). If reflexivity is an issue for these most objective of sciences, then clearly it is of central importance for social research, where the connection between researcher and research setting – the social world – is clearly much closer. These issues are particularly central to the practice of ethnographic research where the relationship between researcher and researched is typically even more intimate. According to Davies (1999), reflexivity in ethnography provides a practical and comprehensive guide to ethnographic research methods which fully engages with significant issues including subjectivity, objectivity, self/other, etc. This signifies that reflexivity in ethnography tackles all the relevant research questions and is also present in all stages of the research, from selection of topic to fieldwork, data generation and analysis to ethics and writing up. The positive contributions of reflexivity to methodology which can generate a unique form of material that is, neither accessible directly through native texts, nor simply a reflection of the individual anthropologist's perception (*ibid*). Instead ethnographic practice can fully incorporate reflexivity without abandoning its claims to develop valid knowledge of social reality.

In the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research. These effects are to be found in all

phases of the research process from initial selection of topic to final reporting of results. While relevant for social research in general, issues of reflexivity are particularly significant for ethnographic research in which the involvement of the researcher in the society and culture of those being studied is particularly close (Pratt, 1986). This implies that reflexivity is an opportunity to improve research findings and ultimately, the researcher's own practice.

As ethnography requires becoming immersed in the phenomena under study, Fetterman (2010) states that it offers wealth of experience, information and learning opportunities. This immersion presents a wonderful – if sometimes uncomfortable – opportunity to continuously improve research. Conducting observations of participants' various activities has provided the research with extra depth and quality. As ethnographers are the primary instruments of data generation, they must establish a level of interpersonal rapport that will yield optimal data from participants. Good representations provide accurate and fair portrayals of people and their adaptations. They are based on rigorously accurate data records and plausible analysis, as well as displaying fairness especially to participants in the research (Van Maanen, 1988). Yet, they are also subjective in that they are inevitably influenced by ethnographers' backgrounds, fieldwork experiences, and self-presentations (Walford, 2002). Being a guest in someone else's location, in my case, the two primary schools, taught me about research methods from the people whose social circumstances and cultural understandings I have studied.

At the level of the individual ethnographer, reflexivity is most evident in reporting styles in which ethnographers try in various ways to show how they are implicated or included in their discussions of peoples being studied (Steier, 1991). The question that has been addressed at a general philosophical level and in terms of research practice is how to utilise reflexivity fully in ethnographic research. Ethnographers must address issues related to roles, relations, and representations through reality checks and self-reflection. Hemmings (2007) argues that these methodological issues must be addressed by ethnographers belonging to either the same or a different ethnic group as their participants. I continuously sought to develop methodological foundations which encouraged and incorporated reflexivity through justifying my position and past experiences (see chapter 1) and from drawing on literature of CRT and feminist theory. It can be argued that the results of a research based on ethnographic fieldwork,

informed by reflexivity and assessed by a CRT and feminist theory is expressive of a reality. Hence the following section is devoted to addressing the ethnographic approach as an understanding of it is essential in this research.

My own background as an Arab Muslim female and my experience in the field contributed to the confusion, conflicts, and difficulties I encountered during the research; therefore, I ensured that it was recorded as field notes along with my emotions. Using ethnography in this research has added significant strength to the richness of data. The data is powerful because I was in the field observing, experiencing and living the events. Similarly, in writing the semi-autobiography and clarifying my position from the start of the research and using CRT and feminist theory have helped the process of data interpretation (see section 5.4.1).

#### **5.4. Understanding Ethnography**

Ethnography literally means ‘writing about the nations’ – ‘graphy’ from the Greek verb ‘to write’ and ‘ethno’ from the Greek noun *ethnos*, usually translated in an English dictionary as ‘nation’ or ‘tribe’ or ‘people’. According to Angrosino (2007:14) “ethnography is the art and science of describing a human group – its institutions, interpersonal behaviours, material productions, and beliefs.” Therefore, ethnography offers people the chance to step outside their narrow cultural backgrounds, to set aside their socially inherited ethnocentrism (a belief of the superiority of the social or cultural group that a person belongs to), if only for a brief period, and to apprehend the world from the viewpoint of other human beings, who live by different meaning systems. Thus ethnography (alternatively, participant observation), is a qualitative research approach, which originally comes from the discipline of social and cultural anthropology (Spradley, 1980; Eriksen, 2001). Ethnography typically refers to fieldwork (or field study) where investigators immerse themselves in the life of people they study (Lewis, 1985).

Through exploring the ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ from respondents’ point of view, a detailed picture can be drawn and the context can be more fully captured as well. A common method to make these descriptions meaningful, holistic and rich is through the adoption of an ethnographic research approach. An ethnographic research lends itself well to topics, which are not easily quantified (Wallen and Fraenkel, 2001). The ethnographer’s goal is to produce, as much as possible,



an intimate understanding of the inter-linkage between the tangible and less tangible aspects of the situation. By its nature, ethnography is descriptive and subjective, but is still deemed valuable, as it can provide holistic, insightful, naturalistic and spontaneous data. In this section, philosophical views associated with ethnography are examined. Forms of research design and data generation, which are distinctive of an ethnographic approach, are discussed and the methodological debates explored.

#### **5.4.1. Significance of an Ethnographic method**

Interest in the ethnographic method has been growing steadily over the last decade as it captures the richness of individual experience (e.g. Bhatti, 1999; Finlay, 2002; Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). Ethnography has become an essential device for understanding school culture, not least the way in which faith and multiculturalism are mediated through practice within the classroom (Spradley, 1979). It is thus, a pathway into understanding the cultural differences that make us what we are as human beings and how we see ourselves; in this case, as part of a faith-based environment. The process involved making cultural inferences from three significant sources: (a). what people said; (b). the way people acted; and (c). what people used.

Although ethnographies regarding education and schools have been carried out, they were mostly carried out in secondary schools (Wright, 1986; Bhatti, 1999; Laffan, 2004; Christensen and James, 2008) and those conducted in primary schools researched teachers' and pupils' experiences (Gilmore and Glatthorn, 1982; Acker, 1990; Renold, 2001). Other ethnographic studies of children also reveal how religious and cultural elements interact and change over time (e.g. Jackson and Nesbitt, 1993; Ostberg, 2000; 2003). Studies also concentrated on using questionnaires or interviews with either teachers or parents (Acker, 1990; Bhatti, 1999). The ethnographic study conducted by Acker (1990) investigated the impact of government legislation on primary school teachers. The ethnography lasted about 6 years, from 1987-1993 at one primary schools, to explore the influence of legislations on teachers' work and culture. An additional ethnographic study was carried out by Bhatti in 1999. She explored the views of teachers, parents and children in secondary schools with a view to discover what parents expect from their children's school and how teachers perceived their roles (Bhatti, 1999). A more recent ethnography was undertaken by Green

in 2009 who researched the influence of Bible-based ethos on pupils and staff experiences at a college and two academies (Green, 2010). Although situated in essentially the same field, none of the above have taken the direct approach of this research. This ethnography is original as it concentrates on the impact of faith on school culture and pupils' behaviour in two primary schools through observations, interviews focus groups and documentations. Ethnography is not a method of data collection *per se*, but a philosophical style of research that is distinguished by its objectives (Rose, 1990; Brewer, 2000), and phenomenological orientation. This research involved work that aimed to describe and understand the workings and practice of faith manifested in teaching and learning, as well as the wider school culture.

Somekh and Lewin (2006), outline a central purpose of ethnography, which is to get involved in a social world and understand and describe how its culture works. The researcher in this view becomes involved in the study, creating qualitative 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1988, as cited in Somekh and Lewin 2006) and any analysis of data, to persuade the reader in what Lincoln and Guba (1989 as cited in Somekh and Lewin 2006) call transferability. According to Hammersley (1998) the central goal of ethnographic research is often conceptualised as providing an analytic or theoretical description which not only remain close to the concrete reality of particular events, but also reveal general features of the life of a particular category of people, group or setting. In the same sense, Van Maanen (1988) and Walford (2002) highlight that ethnography seeks to explore thorough data and meanings everyday incidents instead of assimilating them into the researcher's preconceived notions about specific realities and concerns. Thus Jeffrey and Troman (2004) have considered ethnographies as tools to achieve rich analysis that gets close to the lived experience of participants in social settings. This implies discovering the complex culture that gives a person sharp meaning to the lives of others. If we are to understand the complexities of what is happening in social situations we need to employ an ethnographic approach, which "captures and records the voices of lived experience...contextualises experience...goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances...presents details, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:83). Thus ethnography, as an approach, has become a fundamental tool for understanding ourselves and the multicultural societies of the modern world. Furthermore, the goal of researchers engaging in ethnographic research is to

'paint a portrait' of a social setting - for example; a school or a classroom - in as thorough, accurate and vivid a manner as possible, so that others can truly 'see' the school and its participants and what they do (Van Maanen, 1988).

Robson (2002:186) argues that "using an ethnographic approach is very much a question of general style rather than of following specific prescription about procedure". As suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:2) all ethnographic approaches "bear a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life". The central technique of capturing the social and cultural perspectives is indeed the conversation in the field, which forms the basis of everyday communication (Emerson *et al.*, 1995). According to Van Maanen (1988), an ethnographic approach intends that the researcher enters into a close and long-term relationship with people being researched in order to understand their behaviour more accurately. Thus, through lived experience, careful interpretation of the language used in social contexts and social relationships in schools, guided data was generated. It was even possible through the interrelation of these methods to arrive at more accurate analysis and interpretations of the actual actions and concerns. In this context, ethnography encouraged the use of reflexivity, enabling the researcher to gather evidence informally from different sources and from different perspectives (Wolpe, 1988; and Bhatti, 1999). In this research, people were studied in their natural setting (school environment), including my direct participation in the teaching and learning activities. This was to ensure that data was generated in a systematic manner and the experience was gained from being in the field.

Given the position of the research and the methodological approach to understand the manifestations of faith *in situ*, it provides a rich textured description of the two school experiences. This was carried out through the study of participants and events in the chosen schools as they appeared to me. When asking questions about faith and school, they are to do with the existence of individuals, how they construct themselves in particular contexts and how the school sees itself. Hence in this research, the researcher was also embedded within that context. Thus adopting open-ended informal conversations, semi-structured, documentary data analysis and long-standing observations; it was possible to produce data guided by the participants themselves and the context under investigation. Methods (techniques) of data generation (see section 5.7)

were tailored to fit the requirement of the topic under investigation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). However, being in the field was the most significant source of generating new knowledge about society and culture.

There has been widespread criticism of what are seen as the impossibilities of the aims of ethnography. For example, Thomas (1991) and Ashcroft *et al.* (2002) would disapprove of ethnography as a method of research as it opens up the possibility of introducing bias and prejudice. However, Greene *et al.* (1989) emphasise that all methods have inherent biases and limitations, and so the use of only one method to assess a given phenomenon will inevitably yield biased and limited results. Yet when two or more methods that have offsetting biases are used to assess a given phenomenon, and the results of these methods converge or support one another, then the validity of inquiry findings is enhanced. This research utilised participants' observations, interviews and informal chats/conversations as well as analysing school documents and letters (see section 5.7) to strengthen data collection and analysis (Denscombe, 1998). Utilising various methods in such way has been referred to by Greene *et al.* (1989) as triangulation. As a means of strengthening the ethnography in general and its data generated and analysed, triangulation has been encouraged by Angrosino (2007). According to Greene *et al.* (1989) a motive for mixing various types of data is to enable results from one method to assist in developing/informing the other method. Also as discovered in the initial pilot (discussed in the forthcoming section), aspects of validity and reliability do not align very well with this research or notions of ethnography, as they are conventional criteria linked to science. This ethnographic approach, which articulates with CRT and feminist standpoint, discusses my emotional standpoint, through empathy, connection and the extent to which the research is evocative and transformative.

Ethnography has been further criticised for being subjective (Thomas, 1991), lacking precision due to absence of quantification, studying very small samples which produce findings of little value (Clifford, 1988), and failing to follow well-designed explicit procedures that are replicable (Thomas, 1991). However, according to Brewer (2000) and Angrosino (2007) studying cases in depth and documenting processes occurring overtime, ethnographers would not lose relevant information of the cases in their natural context. Additionally,

Hammersley (1998) and Somekh and Lewin (2006) argue that an ethnographic method has opened the field to analysis in a way that other methods do not.

My subjectivity throughout this research has been a source of strength, as I have come to recognise that it has always existed and was part of my being. Therefore, to state that I am absent from the process of orchestrating the text, selecting particular quotes or making judgements would be untrue to the research as I am the one telling the story. However, for the purpose of doing a rigorous job of research and being reflexive, I need to allow my prejudices and prejudgments to be challenged. It is my subjectivity and that subjectivity is associated with my standpoint as a female Muslim researcher, hence justifying the importance of feminist and CRT to this chapter and the whole thesis. At the same time, ethnographers often use techniques designed to ensure that their findings are not personal (Atkinson, 1992). I have engaged with the different perspectives and create the most nuanced and balanced account that I can.

Objectivity implies standing back, putting my values aside and approaching this PhD as a passive researcher, which was the position I took with my initial pilot study (see section below). However, Ashcroft *et al.* (2002) argue that an observer cannot be neutral or operate outside their own assumptions. Therefore, the idea of creating more distance between me and this research was not the appropriate route to take as was proven in the initial pilot. I have particular values, and core to the research are my interest and my disposition, it is who I am that very much shapes the research. These are utterly fundamental to my standpoint as a Muslim researcher and affirm that I am absolutely essential to this research process. Therefore, methodologically, ethnography enabled me to have deeper insights and perspectives on a complex culture and provided more clarity on the lives of those identified as part of the faith culture. This was realised through the journey of initial pilot which assisted in redirecting the research and choosing an ethnographic approach. The forthcoming section details the process of the initial pilot and how it guided this research to this point.

### **5.5. The Initial Pilot**

Initially this research intended to examine the relationship between parental academic achievements, faith and pupils' attainment in three primary schools (see chapter 1). Appendix 1 highlights the original aims of the initial pilot study

and Appendix 2 provides information about the participants from St. Michael Roman Catholic School. The pilot study was conducted in a Roman Catholic primary school. The content of RE and how it is assessed in a Roman Catholic school is different to other faith schools as it is determined by each diocesan bishop for the schools within his diocese. The Department of Catholic Education and Formation sets general guidelines for the content of the RE curriculum in all Catholic schools (DCEF, 2012). The same department has also set out the manner in which RE is to be assessed. Although the content of the National Curriculum subjects is determined by the government, the curriculum content of Religious Education in Catholic schools is determined by the Catholic bishops (*ibid*). All Catholic schools and academies are subject to a diocesan inspection at least every five years. These inspections are carried out by diocesan inspectors appointed by the bishop in whose diocese the school or academy is situated (HMSO, 2005). Maintained Catholic schools and academies are also subject to OfSTED inspections at the intervals prescribed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and Catholic independent schools are also inspected by an independent schools' inspectorate (*ibid*).

The low number of participants in the initial pilot was not expected at the outset, as the research hinged on a large number of interviews to achieve rich data. In total the research aimed to have 36 participants in all three schools, therefore, 12 participants for each school. Throughout the pilot process, I was only able to recruit 7 participants - "I continuously had to sell my research to the parents during every event in school. I felt like a business woman and not a researcher" (Research log 7). Due to inexperience as a researcher, at times I felt ridiculed when talking to parents to convince them of participating, when it was apparent that they "were wary and scared of me and used any excuse just to get away" (Research log 4). Although 7 participants may seem like a small number, it was achieved after attempting many strategies and techniques, whilst facing several challenges and lack of support from school members. I feel very proud and quite successful in one sense to have achieved such a large number of participants and as mentioned in my research log "overall this research could have been worse" (Research log 9). Although the number of participants may be fine for a pilot study, undoubtedly this factor was disappointing. Nevertheless, interviews conducted played a positive role in broadening my experience in the field of research. It enhanced

my interview skills and certainly drew a new plan for the research focus. For more data from the initial pilot study, see Appendix 3.

### **5.5.1. Challenges and Outcome of the Initial Pilot**

This section is most significant as it determines the influence of the pilot study on the whole research. It strongly highlights how and why the direction of the research was altered and the research method and theoretical framework that was adopted subsequently. Additionally, it has been said that full reports of pilot studies are rare in the research literature (van Teijlingen *et al.*, 2001). When pilot studies are mentioned in more detail in academic studies and reports, researchers regularly comment that they ‘had learned from the pilot study’ and made the necessary changes, without offering the reader details about what exactly was learnt (De Vaus, 2002). Some of these processes and outcomes from both successful and failed pilot studies might be very useful to others embarking on projects using similar methods and instruments. This is particularly important as pilot studies can be ‘time-consuming, frustrating, and fraught with unanticipated problems, but it is better to deal with them before investing a great deal of time, money, and effort in the full study’ (Holloway, 1997:84). Therefore, researchers should be encouraged to report their pilot studies, and in particular to report in more detail the actual improvements made to the study design and the research process (Frankland and Bloor, 1999).

On the surface, teachers in St Michael involved in the initial pilot appeared receptive. However, as I became more determined in attempting countless strategies to gain participants and was more visible in school culture (in lessons, assemblies, after school clubs), teachers’ true feelings became apparent. Looking back at my research logs, it is clear to see how I continued to feel emotionally confused and hurt with the way I was being treated “every time I come into school, I can’t help but feel that I’m not welcomed and teachers ignore me. It’s like they want me to finish the research and leave the school ASAP...I don’t understand” (Research log 7). However, as I have come out of that naivety, emotional side and carrying out a retrospective intellectual analysis of where I was at that point, I can make sense of the experience through literature. As CRT unmask and exposes racism in its various settings (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001), when analysing this particular experience through a CRT lens, it could perhaps be a form of racism. This was a very significant moment in the

research in terms of the new direction I took as a researcher, due to my appearance, gender, ethnicity and religion (see chapter 4 section 4.4).

According to many children, RE lessons focused only on the Christian aspect, for instance, one of the children mentioned “we do about Jesus...and stories in the Bible.” Since the Education Act of 1944, RE was singled out from the curriculum and schools have been by law required to provide Religious Education (Hewer, 2001). Gruber (2005) highlighted the importance of RE and argue that the children in our schools need its spiritual dimension to be taken seriously and religious-based schools are in the best position to do that. Therefore, I became inspired to explore how faith is manifested in children’s learning and to what extent RE was visible in schools. I believed it was important to carry out an ethnographic study, which enabled me as a participant, to observe school religious activities and explore how children perceive them.

I naively believed that “school visitors would be warmly welcomed regardless of its denomination”. However, looking back now, I can affirm that in this school, I was depicted as odd and discriminated against due to my dress code and faith as pointed out earlier. This sort of experience has been discussed by, Mirza (1998) and Rhys (2007), who highlight a number of incidents where discrimination occurred due to dress code and culture. To make sense of my experience through a CRT lens, I could affirm that I have not been given full opportunity to partake in activities by members of St Michael School due to my race and ethnicity. My presence in school could have been seen as undermining the Roman Catholic faith. Due to the initial pilot study, I feel very strongly about challenging racism in our culture, in the same way that CRT challenges traditional ideologies of diversity and existing social hierarchies (Gillborn, 2005). Additionally, the black feminist Collins (2000) described how her lived experience and the trauma she had to negotiate throughout life, enabled her to understand the situation better than any outsider. In a sense, my treatment in that context has an interesting resonance with Collins’ argument. Due to my physical appearance and faith, I was excluded from the school community and viewed as a stranger by many school members. It is recognised that suspicion surrounding research is not unique to faith schools, however, the combination of my gender, faith, ethnicity - that of an Asian woman - and research theme was a source of open curiosity and suspicion in many cases (Van Dijk, 2000).



Although at the start of the pilot, I sensed that things were wrong, it was not until later in the research that I realised that I was being othered. A report written by the BBC (2006) emphasises how women of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Caribbean descent in the UK are being penalised in various sectors. Similarly, Bhatti (1999) faced various challenges of being accepted into the school whilst conducting her research. Gradually and with the support of my supervisors, I steadily became aware of my position in school as the only Muslim female. Therefore, I became conscious at all times that I did not exactly fit into that particular culture, due to my appearance and dress code. This initial pilot revealed that due to my faith and cultural background I was being isolated, excluded, and obstructed in my attempt to integrate into the school environment. Therefore, as a consequence of these multiple experiences, I expressed a wish of expanding this research in order to observe how faith, in its various forms, is manifested in primary schools. Also I became aware of the need to spend more time in school, to become immersed in the culture as a means of understanding the dispositions of faith *in situ*.

Reflecting back on the initial pilot study, it is now apparent that I was operating within a framework of distance and neutrality at the outset of the research. This was believed to be the 'right method' and what 'proper' academic social science research was about. My position in the research was not clearly extricated, hence, I was completely detached from the case study and refer to myself in the third person instead of using 'I', and the understanding of method and approaches was largely unarticulated. I acknowledge that during that stage, I was somewhat naive about research methods and the process was vague and cloudy. The pilot study was an excursion that was not successful in obtaining the required number of participants; however, it led me to this research. Appropriateness and the more nuanced perspective of research came much later in the process and the understanding about ethnography and feminist theory was made just before the transfer report. Subsequently the initial pilot enabled me to realise that the answers and responses I received lacked richness or detail, therefore the quality of the data, (or lack of) persuaded me to change. The initial pilot process greatly ties in with the revelation that ethnography was the approach of conducting my research. Subsequently, theories such as CRT and feminist theory have come to light to use in this research.

The outcome of the pilot's data analysis suggested critical changes to the central question of the research. Parents' participation was eliminated as key participants in the research; however, teachers and other school members became more significant in the new research focus. The shift was carefully planned and thoroughly researched. The research became more focused and therefore there was some modification of the aims, methodology and overall approach. Since the initial pilot study, the focus of the PhD changed to examining how faith is manifested qualitatively in primary schools. The experience of the pilot study and extensive review of literature was extremely significant which helped change the direction of the research. Such productive experiences enabled me to reflect positively on the project as a whole, and on the stated aims and methodology, in particular. With these issues in mind, I elected to refine the methodology (details discussed in the forthcoming sections) and my approach by carrying out a detailed ethnography of school culture, as related to faith-based practice, in order to evolve the research and produce additional findings.

As the initial pilot has now been explained and reasons for changing the direction of the research have been clarified, forthcoming sections discuss the actual ethnographic research focusing on the ways faith is manifested in two primary schools. The research field is discussed followed by an explanation of the data generation techniques.

## **5.6. The Two Schools**

The North West of England is well known for its unique position in Britain, owing to its numerous and multiple faith-based schools, which are part of the state school system (Couch, 2003). This is due to the role Churches play in the community and the ethnically and culturally diverse communities that inhabit the North West. At primary level, the North West had the highest proportion of faith schools in 2008 at 48% (Bolton and Gillie, 2009). Due to the multicultural nature and large provision of faith-based schools, the region provided an outstanding location for ethnographic research to be carried out in the primary phase of education. Due to the dominance of Christian schools in the North West, a primary school was selected from a Church of England faith. Also, as a result of the large multicultural and multi-diverse community, a community school with an Islamic ethos was chosen. The two schools were selected to reflect a range of

lived experiences of ethnic and religious diversity of schooling, with different pupils offering different choices in terms of faith and non-faith schools. Therefore, owing to the nature of an ethnographic study, it was more productive to focus on observing two primary schools in the North West which incorporate the different faith approaches. A single school provided a great setting for investigation; however, two schools provided this research with further opportunities for comparisons and also facilitated a deeper understanding of both faith orientations. Although discussions regarding choices of the most appropriate schools took place between my supervisors and I, the two identified schools were ultimately selected for the following reasons:

- The geographic location of the two schools is close.
- The community in which they are located, all share similar socio-economic characteristics, reflected by particular information/data – see below.
- The community closeness but differences in faith within the two schools is deemed to constitute the basis for an in depth analysis.
- The schools are selected for the faith based nature of their provision.
- The two schools have the advantage of being mixed schools and of having diversity in its children intake in terms of faith, cultural, social class and ethnicity.

Due to issues regarding confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the two schools:

#### **5.6.1. St. Liam's Church of England Primary School**

This is a mixed primary, with pupils ranging from 4-11 years of age with 164 pupils on roll in 2009 (DfE, 2009). A voluntary controlled school is a state-funded school in which a foundation or trust (in this case a Church) has some formal influence in the running of the school. Such schools have less autonomy than voluntary aided schools, in which the foundation/Church pays part of any building costs. Regarding the number of pupils with SEN, in 2009, 15% were in possession of statements and 26% without statements (OfSTED, 2009). According to the report (*ibid*), this school serves an area of severe disadvantage and most of its pupils are from ethnic minority groups. 87% of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is more than three times the average

and the majority of children speak English as an additional language. About 68% of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and a small minority are refugees or asylum seekers (*ibid*).

### **5.6.2. Beale Community Primary School**

This is a mixed primary school with pupils ranging from 3-11 years of age. It has a recognised Islamic ethos and almost four fifths of its pupils are Muslims (DfE, 2009). In 2009, there were 237 children on roll. Regarding the number of SEN, 5% of pupils are with statements and 16% are without statements (OfSTED, 2010). According to OfSTED, the area and social circumstances in which the school is situated are extremely challenging with very high levels of unemployment (*ibid*). 80% of the pupils were entitled to receive free school meals, which is much higher than average and a similar proportion of pupils learn English as an additional language. Just over 97% of pupils belong to ethnic minority groups and in total, pupils come from 28 different countries and 26 different languages are spoken (*ibid*).

### **5.7. Techniques for Generating Data**

This section is devoted to discuss the techniques utilised for data gathering in this research. Methods employed were flexible, more open-ended and largely without pre-determination (Brewer, 2000; Angrosino, 2007). Knowledge of the local culture in combination with participant observations, interviews and textual analysis formed the architecture of the findings and were crucial in assessing the nature and scope of the research question. Ethnography should be considered a deliberate inquiry process guided by a point of view, rather than a reporting process guided by a standard technique or set of techniques, or a totally intuitive process that does not involve reflection (Walford, 2002). The shape of the research techniques and instruments used in fieldwork was determined by the ethnographer's explicit and implicit questioning process as informed by experience in the field situation and knowledge of previous anthropological research.

In this research, data was generated over a period of two years, which included: lengthy interviews and ample casual conversations with headteachers, different members of school staff (including teaching assistants, bilingual supporters,

dinner ladies and cleaners) parents and children individually and in groups. This was carried out along-side observations in and out of classrooms which enabled me build a detailed picture of the school culture and children's learning process (an ethnographic key has been setup for all interviews, focus groups, documentations and observations, see appendix 4). Children of various ages were also observed outside classroom situations and their feelings and opinions towards the schools and different elements were also discussed and noted.

Whenever possible and with minimal distraction caused to staff and pupils, I used to record the data gained from observations, and in most cases it was in the toilet, library, or my car. Teachers were always very suspicious when I was taking notes; therefore, it had to be done very discreetly in my free time. This was similar to Bhatti's (1999) experience of the ethnography as she had to be careful not to make notes in front of teachers. This took place via note-taking and taping using a digital voice recorder. Due to the human mind tending to forget quickly, researcher's field notes are crucial in qualitative research to retain data gathered (Lofland and Lofland, 1999). Miles and Huberman (1984) emphasise that field notes must be dated so they can be later correlated with the data. Therefore, I ensured that all field notes were dated and written no later than the morning after. My field notes included recordings of what I heard, saw, experienced and thought during the observations and my reflections of the process. Bailey, (1996) highlighted that besides discipline; field notes also involve feelings, timing and vision. At this juncture, it is important to note that field notes are a step toward data analysis as Morgan (1997:57-58) remarks that field notes involve interpretation, they are, properly speaking, "part of the analysis". Following is a detailed discussion of the methods adopted to generate the data for this research.

### **5.7.1. Participant Observations**

A key research instrument within ethnography is the use of observations. Participants' observation has a long and distinguished history in qualitative research. Data is generated in various forms, but primarily derived from observations within a small scale/single setting. It has been assumed that observation and an insider perspective sets a high standard of commitment which stands in contrast to the outsider perspective (Foster, 1996). Direct observation, as emphasised by Angrosino (2007), signifies the ability of the

researcher to extract depth and meaning in context. Participant observations is not a method in itself, but rather a personal style adapted by field-based researchers who, having been accepted by the study community, are able to use a variety of data generation techniques to find out about the people and their way of life (*ibid*). Anthropologist James Spradley (1980) refers to the stages of observations as a 'funnel' due to the process gradually narrowing and directing the researchers' focus more deeply into the elements of the setting that have emerged as essential. According to Davies (1999), participant observation includes a single researcher spending an extended period of time, usually at least a year, with people under study in order to gain as complete an understanding as possible of the cultural meanings and social structures of the group and how these are interrelated. Participant observation has frequently been used for studies in institutional settings, such as schools, hospitals or prisons (*ibid*).

An example of the importance of observations is highlighted in Bhatti's (1999) ethnographic research carried out at a comprehensive school in the South of England, exploring the views of teachers, Asian parents and their children concerning schooling and education. Additionally, Davies (1999) carried out ethnographic research adopting participant observation to discuss topics such as ethnic nationalism, feminism and cultural identities. Thus, regardless of its setting or subject matter, participant observation draws on multiple perspectives and data sources to produce contextually rich and meaningful interpretation. It is the act of perceiving the activities and interrelationships of people in the field setting through the researcher's five senses. Observation can also vary in the degrees to which it relies on pre-defined categories. While ethnographers usually employ an unstructured approach, on occasion they may engage in more structured observation (Hammersley, 1998).

Observational field notes are essential as they give a voice to school members and children who do not appear very often in the interview transcripts (Angrosino, 2007). This may be due to a number of reasons: they may be reticent, introverted, less articulate, marginalised, uninterested and so on. According to Coffey (1999) field notes are a way of indicating their presence, their actions, their views and opinions, and, most importantly, making sure that they form part of the overall data generated on which findings are based. Ethnographers can 'write their experience' and work through some of the ideas

and feelings that emerged through their emotional experiences in fieldwork (Brewer, 2000; Fetterman, 2010). This can be done through journal publications or informal blogging.

### **5.7.2. Interviews**

Interviews have tremendous influence on supporting the research (Kvale, 1996; Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Creswell, 2007). Gubrium and Holstein (2002) claimed that when properly contextualised, the interview approach can illuminate various aspects and thoughts of individual practices. According to Hammersley (1998) and Davies (1999), interviewing can vary in the degree to which the interviewer structures the interaction, how directive the questions are and so on.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this ethnography as they were flexible. Such type of interviews is favoured in qualitative research as they can be used both to give and receive information (Hammersley, 1998). Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication. Interviewees were encouraged to expand on a response and introduce freely their own concerns; therefore, the interview was to some extent guided by participants' responses. In addition Radnor (1994) suggested that semi-structured interviews will allow (a) capturing general and specific information about the importance of faith and school ethos, (b) exploring teachers' perspectives on the impact of school culture on learning, (c) establish some background information about the factors affecting children's learning and behaviour, (d) give the participants a voice to talk about what role that faith plays in academic achievements/attainment, (e) enable the researcher to 'get inside' the perspectives of the interviewees and to generate hypotheses from such perspectives and understand what they think is important in their own situation, more specifically, using semi-structured interviews to (f) permit the researcher to keep an open mind and remain open to ideas.

#### **5.7.2.1. Construction of the Interview**

The interview questions are directed to obtain data of how the participants think and feel in the most direct ways and to describe the lived experiences. Therefore, Bentz and Shapiro (1998:39) state that "inquiry doesn't mean looking for answers". The questions are "directed to the participant's experiences,

feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme in question” (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998:96). With regard to data capturing during the qualitative interview, Kvale (1996:1-2) remarks that “it is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest,” where the researcher attempts to “understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold meaning of peoples’ experiences”. Interviews in this research focused on head-teachers, teachers and various members of schools staff to elicit their attitude towards faith and its impact on teaching. Yin (2003) argues that one insight into asking good questions is to understand that research is about questions and not necessarily about answers.

Issues relating to basic concepts of interview techniques, ways of designing an interview investigation and interview analysis as well as means of integration with participants were considered (e.g. Stake, 1995; Arksey and Knight, 1999; Bassegy, 1999; Fontana and Frey, 2000; Denscombe, 2003; Yin, 2003). Two criteria were followed in the development of the interview questions: (a) a review of related literature on faith schools and RE in schools (e.g. Drever, 1995; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Short and Lenga, 2002), and (b) a review of similar instruments designed for the same or similar purpose as the current research (e.g. Hammersley, 1998; Bhatti, 1999). Hence, the following factors were taken into consideration when designing the interview questions:

- Open-ended questions so that participants’ answers were not affected by me and to encourage interviewees to talk freely about their own experience.
- Questions were carefully constructed to ensure they were suitable for the school (as one is a faith school and the other is a community), age group and participants’ position in school. Ethical considerations were taken into account when interviewing participants.
- Interviews were recorded for later transcription and analysis.

In correspondence to the research aims and questions, interviews (see Appendix 5-12) were constructed to explore the main areas:

- Understanding of faith and religious culture within schools.
- Ways in which faith is manifested in schools.
- The complex influence of faith on school culture and ethos.
- Influences of school culture on student learning.
- Teachers’ views on faith impacting on pupil behaviour and understanding.



### 5.7.2.2. Sampling procedure (Participants)

The quality of any research is dependent on the procedures of sampling. It is very important when selecting participants, that it is purposeful and ensures that information gathered will be relevant to the research questions (Patton, 1990). Cohen *et al.* (2007) mentioned that there are two main procedures of sampling: random sampling and purposive sampling. In this research, purposive sampling was used. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative inquiry is interested in purposefully selecting and studying in depth relatively small samples of participants and, in some studies, single cases. Patton (1990:169) suggested that using purposeful sampling enables the researcher to select 'information rich' cases, which can be studied in depth. Similarly, Erlandson *et al.* (1993:82) suggested using purposive sampling in qualitative based inquiry to "maximize discovery of the heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur in the particular context under study". Additionally, possibilities for information richness could be provided by selecting participants for the study who would "most help to answer the basic research questions and fit the basic purpose of the study" (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993:83) and also bring a diversity of backgrounds, perceptions, and experiences to the research.

I selected teachers to participate in interviews after the lengthy observations and seeking advice from the headteacher (see section 5.9.3). In total, 20 interviews were conducted in both schools, with headteachers, teachers and school community members. Regarding the focus groups, 24 year 5 children (4 groups of 3 children for each school) were interviewed. Such figures for interviews and focus groups were made from a belief that this would provide sufficient data and is also the necessary numbers required for the ethnographic research. The following table provides more information about the sample.

<b>St. Liam's C of E Primary School</b>	<b>Beale Community Primary School</b>
Headteacher (male)	Headteacher (female)
4 teachers (3 female and 1 male)	4 teachers (3 female and 1 male)
5 school members (TA, LSA, cook, vicar, cleaner/dinner lady)	5 school members (TA, LSA, Learning mentor, bilingual assistant, cook)
4 groups of 3 children from year 5	4 groups of 3 children from year 5

### **5.7.3. Focus Groups**

The rationale for focus groups is group dynamics, thus generating discussions which lead to discovery, exploration, direction and depth about topics. Additionally, this method was used as an alternative to interviews; to reduce nervousness, encourage a discussion and minimise parents' fear of one-to-one interviews (which was faced during the initial pilot study). I tailored the number of participants for each focus group and length of session to suit the research's topics and certainly the age of children involved. Focus groups were set up to elicit children's interpretation of religion, how they define themselves in terms of faith and the influence of faith on school.

Duncan and Marotz-Baden (1999) argue that focus groups provide researchers with more surprises than other types of research. This is due to participants having the freedom to say anything they like. I realised that focus groups were great for drawing out many points of view from the children and they were naturalistic too (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Although not set up to generalise, focus groups can provide trustworthy data that also leads to important insights about human behaviour (Fern, 2001). I was able to listen to the content of focus group discussions and was aware of any emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions. Therefore, enabling me to learn and confirm not just the facts, but the meaning behind the facts as well as elicit information that paints a portrait of combined local perspectives. However, focus group methodology is not a reliable technique for determining an individual's authentic point of view, as social norms intervene. For example, during a focus group, a participant may affirm another participant by saying, "That's right!" However, the analyst must not assume that the individual has provided their final opinion on the matter. It is plausible that the individual was being supportive rather than honest, therefore, I asked participants to further clarify when this occurred during the interview, as a means of addressing this issue.

### **5.7.4. Informal Conversations**

In addition to the use of interviews and focus groups, which most commonly ethnographic researchers employ, in this research, informal conversations were adopted. This includes the involvement of individual and groups of school members in a discussion/conversation about elements of the research or

aspects of the school activities which I was unsure about and wanted to obtain more details on. Such conversations, as suggested by Davies (1999), will encourage participants to interact with one another as well as with the ethnographer, thereby sharing knowledge and discussing their experience. Whenever possible, I always tried to initiate a discussion between participants to express any opinions without any restrictions (Hammersley, 1998).

#### **5.7.5. Documentary Data**

“Ethnographic researchers prefer primary sources over secondary sources...however; there should be some need for secondary [documentary data] sources” (Wiersma, 2009:248). Yin (1994) confirms this view, highlighting that secondary information is likely to be relevant to every study. The variety of documentary sources that can be utilised and be useful for ethnographic research is potentially immense (Angrosino, 2007) and can be expanded further by the need for ethnographers to be open to creative uses of documentary sources (Davies, 1999). According to Angrosino (2007), an essential area in an ethnographic study employs archival research, which incorporates the analysis of materials that have been stored for research, service and other official or unofficial purposes. Moreover, Hammersley (1998) highlighted that documents including official reports or letters as well as public documents can have important consequences for how they can be used as evidence.

This research gathers documents from both schools which include letters to parents, staff meeting agendas, posters and flyers, school policies and any other relevant textual/visual documents. Such relevant documentary data was needed to obtain more information about the school as a whole and its culture. Generating relevant documentary data focused on school policies and letters related to faith and religion. It also focused on obtaining factual data on RE topics, religious and cultural events occurring in school. However, as suggested by Angrosino (2007), before the utilisation of such documentary data, I need to give initial consideration to questions of its authenticity, credibility and representativeness. Methods suggested by Davies (1999) for testing documents for authenticity, for example place of origin and the internal aspect of the document itself have been taken into consideration. I have checked whether the documents are genuine prior to being used as evidence. I obtained advice from school members about the utilised forms, records and reported events in the

school. Also I ensured that all documents generated were representative of the schools and can be utilised to serve the purpose of the research. In general, close considerations are given to the type as well as context of documents.

The use of documentary data is seen as helpful in gaining insight, in-depth, and enhancing the interpretation process (Creswell, 1994). These documents were valuable as they had the potential to provide rich information which could not necessarily be gathered through the other methods. However, this process required careful attention and focus. Documents were read and were cross referenced with data gathered from observations and interviews (Brewer, 2000). School documents were utilised to check if there was a match between participants' comments and the policy and what was actually taking place in school. It should be mentioned that there was a lot of data on hand, both relevant and irrelevant to this research. It is sufficient to say that such data was a vital reference that allowed for more depth and further insights in to the schools' views on faith.

## **5.8. Trustworthiness of Research Instruments**

The trustworthiness of a qualitative study reflects issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability (Seale, 1999; Devellis, 2003). From the outset of the initial pilot study, I was focused on 'measuring' validity and reliability of the research. I did not envisage facing any challenges with recruiting participants or fitting into the school environment, therefore, I embarked on examining techniques and instruments of the research (Devellis, 2003). I very much regarded procedural objectivity and notions of validity and reliability from a scientific paradigm. At the early stages, I naively believed that good research is about standing back and holding a neutral position. I put my values to one side and approached the process as a passive researcher. To demonstrate my naivety during the early stages, I believed that my interview questions were designed to provide a clearer picture of what actually goes on in the mind of the interviewees, and I also targeted not to inform participants of the answers, so as not to influence their perceptions. In a sense this is a presupposition, that I saw and steered the research in a particular way which was pinned down in a tight design. Although I did not research extensively nor clearly articulate those ideas at the time of the initial pilot, on reflection, it was a perspective that I picked up largely through osmosis. The framework which I

was operating in was about having a tight design, creating distance, achieving objectivity, having questions and particular answers. However, wider literature reviews after the pilot study dispelled some of those myths about the nature of research and process.

As a result qualitative research, which is based on different assumptions about reality and a different worldview, should consider validity and reliability from a perspective congruent with the philosophical assumptions underlying the method. This may even result in naming the concepts of validity and reliability differently (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirm-ability. These terms replace the quantitative concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, respectively. More importantly, the issue of trustworthiness can enhance confidence in a particular study (*ibid*). Several points have been suggested by qualitative researchers to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. These include careful attention to the study's conceptualisation, and the way the data are generated, analysed and interpreted (Silverman, 2000). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the instruments, the data and findings of this research, several procedures have been considered:

- Triangulation: a technique designed to compare and contrast different types of methods to help provide more comprehensive insights into the phenomenon under study. This research employed: participant observations, interviews, informal conversations, school documents and field notes as a means of strengthening the findings. According to Angrosino (2007), findings of an ethnographic study are enhanced by triangulation. A motive for mixing various types of data is to enable results from one method to assist in developing/informing the other method (Greene *et al.*, 1989). This can be very useful, as sometimes what people say about their actions can contrast with their actual behaviour, therefore, triangulation presented an additional angle to the research tools.
- Variation in participants: a great range of participants was visible in the research, as it included headteachers, teachers, other school members (LSAs, TAs, dinner ladies etc.) and children from a wide age range.

- Building trust, assuring participants' privacy and confidentiality: Initially when meeting headteachers and school members, I assured them that they would be listened to without any prejudice (Radnor, 1994). Teachers were informed about the general aims and processes of the research. They were assured that the data generated through interviews would not be used in a way that would have damaging consequences. Moreover, they were assured that their names and schools would remain anonymous and they had the right to withdraw from participation.
- Checking information and materials gathered in this research: I asked school members to check some of the information whether school policies or other documents. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this is another crucial method for establishing credibility in qualitative research as well as reducing the impact of subjective bias
- Cross-checking information from interviews, focus groups and general conversations with school documentations: wherever possible, I would check the information that I have been informed of against documents available in school such as policies or letters and vice versa.

To further refine the ethnography's instruments and provide valuable insights for research design (Holloway, 1997); interview and focus group questions were piloted. Such step provides a structured opportunity for informed reflection on, and modification of, the research design, the research instruments, timing, researcher security and indeed a whole range of issues concerning the everyday conduct of the research (*ibid*). Similarly, Bowling (1997) claims that process evaluations can be used to monitor and assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the research methodology.

### **5.9. Research Field**

When in the field, the ethnographer needs to possess a range of skills and attributes in the areas of planning, organisation, observation, writing (including quick note taking), listening, empathising, reacting, reflexivity and not least of all, energy and stamina. Skills of negotiation are also important, and I always seemed to be negotiating with teachers and pupils: "Can I come to this lesson?";

“Can I participate in this particular conversation?”; “Can I sit here?” This section addresses and discusses the procedures carried out for research investigation.

### **5.9.1. Access to Schools**

The process of obtaining access to the schools was one of the major difficulties I encountered at the beginning of my research project. Gaining access to these schools was completely self-negotiated. My appearance and dress code and a sense of uneasiness with faith research and the politics of religion, appeared to be key factors determining the process of obtaining access. The invisible forces of faith and power (the power of gatekeepers) were still prevalent in determining access to the two schools. My initial entry into the schools negotiated after long meetings with the headteachers explaining the outcome of the initial pilot study and highlighting the new directions of the research. On the basis of their request, a copy of my transfer report was shown to them. Therefore, the access to schools was eased somewhat by the disclosure of the initial pilot study and the fact that new procedures were taking place. In addition, elements of carrying out an ethnography was somewhat eased by being a graduate from university as a primary school teacher. This acted as an open visa to enter the schools and carry out the observations over two years. As a non-teaching researcher, teachers used me as a TA to work with small groups of children. In the playgrounds, teachers asked me to supervise children on the yard. This has helped me as a researcher to observe the learning process in different contexts without being interrupted. In the staff room, I used to converse with teachers and other school members to build up trust and whenever possible, I discreetly wrote notes (on my Winnie the Poo pad).

### **5.9.2. Making Observations**

Generally speaking, the more sensitive the research topic is, the more significant it is for the researcher to participate and learn about their culture (Rohner, 1984; Hofstede, 1994; Koshima, 1998). In order to have an insider's experience and point of view, I explored every day realities of schools' environment by immersing myself into the research fieldwork. Entering into the field as a researcher, I investigated teachers and children's perspectives to see the world through their eyes, to feel what they feel, and to experience what they experience. My routine fieldwork as a researcher was not limited to, observing

school staff activities, but interacting with learners whenever possible. To avoid sceptical reactions from teachers, I did not take field notes during lessons; I usually recorded/made notes when I was alone in the staffroom, classroom, toilets and in my car. Some notes were condensed and some expanded (Spradley, 1980), depending on the research relevance of the situations and occurrences I observed. I also kept a regular notebook to reflect on positive and negative experiences I had encountered during each day.

Similarly, this research used observations over a period of time to enhance its reliability. I was present at both schools for one or two days a week (and sometimes more/less) depending on the activities taking place to extract depth and meaning in context. Diverse activities occurring on the timetable such as; lessons, group work, assemblies, after school clubs, plays and performances, meetings etc. in varied year groups and classrooms were observed.

### **5.9.3. Participants' permission**

In both schools, I personally spoke to various teachers, TAs, bilingual assistants and dinner ladies about taking part in the interviews and arranged a mutually convenient time to conduct the interviews. Participant's information sheets and consent forms were provided for school members (appendix 13) and parents (appendix 14) to sign on behalf of their children. At the time of the children focus groups, I also asked the children to sign a consent form (appendix 15). Similarly, participants were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed, then consent forms were obtained.

All interviews were conducted in convenient settings and times. Allocating interview times took place in accordance with participants' convenience, therefore, not interrupting lesson time or disturbing pupils' learning. Appropriate and quiet locations and were selected. Focus groups were conducted in groups (3 children in each group), however, interviews were carried out individually to give them a chance to explicitly share opinions and information. Interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interview and were given a brief outline of the research, which was adapted according to their age and position in school. I gave listening ears to the interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). These were very important aspects to encourage participants to feel comfortable.



To reduce various problems during the data generation stage, the order of interviews were carefully thought out. It was important to firstly interview teachers and school members, followed closely by children's focus groups and then finally headteachers. Leaving the headteachers until the end was a double edge scenario. Headteachers may hear from teachers about the issues and themes raised in the interviews and start to become possibly defensive or have a rehearsed set of ideas about the questions. However, it was decided to keep headteacher's interviews to the end on the basis that it enhanced the quality of interview by discussing issues which arose from prior interviews with teachers, other school members and children. It also allowed for additional questions than the ones planned and to certainly gain a deeper discussion. I was free to modify the interview sequence by adding and rewording questions (Cohen and Manion, 1980). I was also able to alter the order of questions, omit some that seem inappropriate and introduce supplementary questions not included on the list. Therefore, wording of questions was not necessarily the same for all participants in both schools. Interviews with staff and other school members lasted roughly between 45 minutes – 1 hour each, children's focus groups 30 minutes and headteachers up to 1 hour. 20 interviews demonstrated the number of staff and other school members who took part in interviews. Focus groups were also organised as an alternative to interviews for 24 year 5 children (4 groups of 3 children for each school).

### **5.10. Refining Interview Questions**

In the ethnography, refining interviews was an attempt to answer questions such as: Do the interview components meet the research aims? Are the methods actually carried out as planned? What factors facilitate or inhibit the implementation and the outcome (Silverman, 1993)? Hence pilot interviews were conducted with one school teacher, one bilingual support assist and a children's focus group. Each interview took place in an appropriate place, at a convenient time and used a voice recorder (for those willing to be recorded).

The outcome of piloting interviews revealed potential problem areas of the interview questions. Much light had been shed on the questions and revealed new avenues to be investigated. A number of minor alterations were made to the questions and in the interview technique. Some questions were added or removed for interviews as a result of outcomes from the pilot interview. For

instance, following a teacher's pilot interview, the wording of one question was altered to suit the nature of the two schools, as one was a Church of England and the other was a community school. Therefore the two questions became:

- This is a faith-based school, what is meant by that? (For the faith school)
- What are the differences between a faith school and a county school? (For the community school)

Additionally, I changed another question from:

- What role does faith play in your school environment?

To:

- To what extent are aspects of faith apparent within the school community?

The new question, as a result became more explicit and allowed participants to elaborate and give examples.

Similarly, I changed the wording from one question:

- What strategies have you used to accommodate the children in your classroom?

To:

- What strategies have you used to accommodate the Muslim children in your classroom?

The pilot question was vague and not linked to religious aspects. Therefore, by adding the word 'Muslim', it became much clearer and specific, allowing for a deeper answer and getting some examples.

The following question was removed as it was not necessary to know the exact number of EAL or SEN children.

- How many children are classified as EAL? SEN?

In fact what was important was the strategies and mechanisms used to help those who were registered as SEN/EAL.

In the children's focus group pilot, question 3 was changed from:

- Do you think subjects you do in school help your learning?

To:

- Do you think activities you do in school help your learning?

Children struggled to understand the first question during the pilot study and asked me to clarify the meaning. This was due to the school using the terms 'lessons' or 'activities'. I purposefully elected not to use the word 'lessons' to allow children to discuss extracurricular activities which were not related to lessons/subjects in the classroom environment. Therefore, the word 'subject' was replaced with 'activities'.

Furthermore, question 7 was added to the interview after the pilot study:

- What does RE stand for?

This question helped me to find out if children knew and were aware of what RE stood for prior to asking the question related to what was taught in RE.

In question 8 the word 'celebrations' was added:

- What religions or celebrations have you learnt about?

This decision was made to open up the possibilities for the children and enhance the discussion. But I was also aware that celebrations as a term might be used and alluded to in schools more often than religion.

Additionally, a new question was added related to school dinner as it was not included in the pilot interview:

- What do you think of school dinners?

Finally, the order of one of the question was changed. I asked the following question at the start of the interview rather than at the end, as an icebreaker into the discussion:

- What do you want to become when you are older?

Piloting interviews provided me with experience of the interview durations, thereby changing the time to make the schedule work.

### **5.11. Data-Storing Methods**

All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded using a sensitive portable digital recorder, with interviewees' permission (Arksey and Knight 1999). An ethnographic key has been setup for all interviews, focus groups, documentations and observations (See appendix 4). Each interview was

assigned a code, for example: Participant, 21 May 2010. Where more than one interview took place on a specific date, the different interviews were identified by an alphabet character, (Participant-B, 21 May 2010). Each interview was recorded on digital voice recorder, where the file was then stored on the computer. Each file was labelled with the assigned interview code. As soon as possible after each interview, I listened to the recording and made notes which helped to formulate further ideas or questions that were important and relevant to the topic. Such questions were later explored whilst observing and through asking the next interviewee. Each interview was later verbatim transcribed but without judgmental evaluation. At all times, I ensured that recording equipment functioned well and that spare batteries and microphone were available. The interview settings were further free from background noise and interruptions.

### **5.12. Ethical Considerations**

In this research, using ethnographic methods to explore a sensitive topic (faith) involving school members and children in primary schools, was a challenging task. Although observation is more likely to provide a comprehensive description of schools' realities, it incites debate on research ethics (Bulmer, 1980, Dingwall, 1980; Adler and Adler, 2000). Although I was aware of the sensitivity of the topic reported by other ethnographers in the literature, without first-hand field experience I was psychologically unprepared for ethical challenges embedded in ethnography until encountering a procession of problems in the field. Hence, in this section, ethical challenges I personally encountered in the fieldwork are detailed. Similarly, reflections on ethical challenges, responding to them and adjusting field activities to overcome such challenges are described. Additionally lessons derived from ethical challenges are illustrated.

To carry out the research in LJMU, a new ethics form was completed due to the major shifts and changes from the previous research, which was piloted to the current one. Therefore, prior to the research, LJMU's ethics permission and approval was sought. I was acutely aware of the ethical issues embedded in a research of this nature. In considering the ethics of the various research instruments used in this research, I was aware of the ethical guidelines and established regulations such as those produced by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004). Ethics is typically associated with morality, and both deal with matters of right and wrong (Babbie, 1995). Reviewing

literature reveals that a number of ethical principles should be taken into considerations while conducting any kind of research. Research ethics are very significant to provide researchers with some guidelines on how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way (Pring, 2000). The main ethical considerations include negotiating access, gaining informed consent from participants, offering the right to withdraw, protection of identity and confidentiality (Christians, 2000; Pring, 2000; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The researchers should ensure that the result of their work causes no harm to participants. Malin (2003:22) argues that “the rightness or wrongness of the research is judged according to its consequences”. Wallen and Fraenkel (2001) point out that there are three ethical areas which all researchers should consider: (1) the protection of their participants, (2) the confidentiality of research data and (3) the avoidance of deception of research subjects.

Additionally, it is important within qualitative research design to involve participants from the beginning of the process, in order to ensure an equal balance of power between them and researcher. It has been noted that this engagement and collaborative work between participants and researchers can overcome any ethical problems (Burgess, 2002). Reviewing literature about ethical restrictions (e.g. Adler and Adler, 2000; Etherington, 2007; Li, 2008) and having an experience of social and cultural aspects of the fieldwork, I managed to challenge the ethical restrictions while conducting the research. I fulfilled ethical obligations as a guideline which deemed to be useful in the generation and analysing of information in the two primary schools.

As qualitative researchers, we tend to connect ourselves to the researched individuals on both cognitive and emotional levels (Mitchell, 1991), therefore our lives are often embedded within our fieldwork experiences in such a way that all of our interactions in the field involve moral choices (Tedlock, 2000). In the fieldwork, everyday social realities can be unpredictable and delicate because they are largely shaped by situated and often unforeseen circumstances (O’Brien, 2006). As such, ethnographers who engaged in such settings have no choice but to solve many ethical challenges they encountered in the research process (Etherington, 2007). As such fieldwork requires ethnographers to keep mindful awareness of ongoing relationships and to make frequent adjustments accordingly. Social relationships and interactions between the researcher and the researched are extremely sensitive and delicate (Ellis, 2007). However, such

sensitivity can always be repaired with appropriate field strategies. Certain skills, such as the psychological preparations for the unforeseen occurrences of ethical problems and the flexibility of adjusting to different field circumstances, are crucial in successful fieldwork. Laine (2000:93) affirms that “an understanding of a number of potential difficulties and capacity to be flexible may sooth the way to dealing with some challenges that revolve around sensitive topics, regions, and methods”.

At the beginning, I made field entry as courteous as possible to ease the worries of schools’ members. However, due to my inexperience in handling the pressure of unpredictable field situations and my eagerness to recruit potential participants, the solution to one problem naturally caused another; my disclosure of the research objectives took away worries from a number of schools’ staff, but simultaneously silenced some voices. My active observations not only created the awkward situations and dramatically changed the behaviour of the teachers, but also subjected me as a researcher to psychological risks. To avoid such disturbing inner struggles and conflicts, in later field trips, I adjusted my membership role and reduced the level of involvement. With my ongoing adjustment, in the later stage of my fieldwork I was able to write notes by moderately participating in schools’ activities as a detached insider, without experiencing further ethical problems.

In exploring or revealing information about the ways in which people carry out their professions, field researchers often face ethical problems that cannot be easily resolved with general ethical guidelines (Punch, 2000; Murphy and Dingwall, 2002). Hence, in order to conduct research to explore evidence about social context, researchers must always prepare themselves psychologically and technically for the unexpected and be willing to make adaptive changes in the field (Lather, 2004).

The ethical challenges inherent in participant observation are a well-recognised concern in ethnographic research (Van Maanen, 1988). Bulmer (1980) and Etherington (2007) assert that writing about ethical challenges including potential and unforeseen events experienced during fieldwork can be helpful in relation to methods and data analysis. As this research is designed to reveal faith in schools, adopting open participant observation is well justified. The naturalistic observational technique I employed in this study allowed me to

observe and document both physical settings and social activities of participants as the flow of teaching and learning scenes naturally extended. On a number of occasions my social interactions with children and other members of school staff caused disturbing feelings of awkwardness and uneasiness. For example when children rebelled in class against the teachers' decision of only making Christmas cards and were asking for my permission to make Eid cards (see section 7.2.3). Similarly, when a teacher reproached me and another pupil for speaking in Arabic in class (see section 7.2.3). I became concerned about harmful psychological consequences of my research work, wondering to what extent I could adjust my research role to the complexity and the dynamics of field social and cultural relationships.

Furthermore, I adjusted the level of my involvement and interaction from active to moderate (Spradley, 1980). Instead of actively engaging, substantial conversations with school members took place (Adler and Adler, 1987). This adjustment not only helped to avoid similar ethical challenges I experienced at the beginning of this fieldwork, but also gave me a much-needed psychological space to participate in school activities as an insider and observe it as an outsider.

In order to establish trust and rapport with participants, and also elicit reliable and authentic information from them, I conducted all interviews in a respectful, friendly, and non-judgmental manner. The most important aspect of the interviewer's approach involves conveying the idea that the participant's information is acceptable and valuable (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). According to McCracken (1988) it is better to appear slightly naive and agreeable than to give any sign of a critical or sardonic attitude. Before interviewing, I repeatedly explained the purpose of the research to make sure participants understood the benefits of their participation, particularly their right to confidentiality. As the interviews progressed, participants became more and more comfortable sharing their experiences. Their openness yielded detailed and in-depth information on faith and education.

While many social phenomena can be considered as 'sensitive' in general terms, sensitive research refers to the study of cultural, reverential or secretive human activity and behaviour involving vulnerable research subjects (Li, 2008). The concept of sensitivity cannot be disregarded in this research since the

subject matter is related to faith and culture which constitute theological implication (*ibid*) and obviously provides a central focus on religious values. In researching faith in primary schools, a number of key ethical considerations were taken into account:

*Gaining access to the site:* In this research, it was necessary to obtain permission to do the research in the chosen schools and in this case, the headteacher is the principal gatekeeper (see section 5.9.1). Greig and Taylor (1999:92) explained, “the practical difficulties of gaining access to settings” could have limited the research. I had to explain my role and the purpose and focus of the research to both headteachers (Bell, 1995). A participant’s information sheet and consent form was given to the headteachers at both schools prior to the commencement of the research (appendix 16). Greig and Taylor (1999) suggest that access may need to be renegotiated. At different stages of the research, different levels of involvement may be required and it is, therefore, important to negotiate consent at each stage. Various other permissions were required throughout this research in order to gain access to numerous social situations in the school, such as staff and governors’ meetings, after school clubs and parents’ evenings. Additionally, a change may also occur within the school such as a new member of staff, Head of Department etc., and this will also require renegotiation of permission to research. Thus, negotiating access was an ongoing process, and not something that happened only at the beginning of the research process.

*Identification of the research goals:* Essentially, this means that the researcher must make his/her research goals and objectives clear to the participants and respondents (Emerson *et al.*, 1995; Bassey, 1999). Therefore, a letter with attached consent forms was designed and provided for both headteachers (appendix 16) to inform them of the research and clarify its focus (although a lengthy meeting was held previously with both headteachers to explain the research). This enabled me to have access to the school premises during the full length of the ethnography. Also headteachers’ approval was sought for participants’ information letters prior to interviews taking place. McNiff (2000) emphasises the importance of the right to withdraw from the research, a feature, which was drawn to the attention of staff and pupils. No staff declined to take part in the research during observations, and some were supportive and co-operative. However, during the interview stage, some teachers repeatedly



missed their interview times and rearranged for another time. Their decisions were respected and I did not force them to do the interview. In addition, Yin (2003) signified the importance of obtaining a written consent of parents for personal attention to individual children; therefore, participants' information letters and consent form for year 5 parents (appendix 14) were also distributed towards the interview phase of the ethnography to get a signed permission. This was to ensure that parents were aware of the research and consented for their children to take part in the research. Such steps provided parents and children with additional information regarding the research and enhanced their understanding of the work required (Burgess, 1984; Stake, 1995).

Although parents gave permission for their children to partake in the research, an additional participant information sheet and consent form was given out to children prior to the focus group (appendix 15). This was to ensuring children were aware of confidentiality issues and were still willing to partake. Furthermore, I clarified to all participants that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time if they so wish in their letter and affirmed it verbally. I always began the focus group by reminding the children that I was interested in finding out about faith at their particular school. I asked if they minded the interview being taped (no-one did) and I stressed that the interviews were completely confidential, that no information would be disclosed, and that no-one else (such as their peers, or their teacher) would ever hear what they said. Although one of my main objectives was to facilitate a free-flowing conversation, my questions were generally concerned with events and situations and I tried to discourage the children from talking about other individuals. Only a very few children ever asked me what I was intending to do with their conversations, but when they did I generally answered by saying that I was hoping to write a book about faith in schools, but that I would change their individual names, and the name of the school. Although I would agree with Epstein (1998) that the children did not possess the experience or the framework for understanding who I was, and what I represented as a researcher, and although the notion of informed consent may be flawed and that children's capacity to understand the full concept necessarily limited, I regarded the children as being competent social beings. I felt that I had at least tried as best I practically could to ensure that their consent was as informed as possible.

*Anonymity and confidentiality:* This issue has both ethical and legal considerations. It is important to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents, unless the researcher obtains permission to do otherwise. This means that researchers must be certain that the research does not harm respondents of the research (Noddings, 1988). As a result, information about schools will be confidential and it will not be possible to identify any of the schools participating in the research. An integral part of this environment was the need to be explicit in the format and purpose of the organised interview. Permission was sought from teachers and pupils for tape-recording the interviews on the assurance that all data would remain confidential. They may not have expressed their views on tape with such honesty had I not been able to establish some form of trust and credibility.

Although participants in the research did not object to the actual name being used, it is a research convention not to reveal actual names and it is important to respect individuals' values and sense of privacy (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The use of pseudonyms for school names and the modification of situations and events is now common practice in reporting field studies (Binns, 2006) as it is regularly argued that this facilitates access to institutions when individuals learn that anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained. The essence of anonymity is that the identity of participants and their schools are not identifiable by the information given (Kvale, 1996; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The issue of anonymity is highly correlated with the issue of confidentiality which connotes the idea that attribution of comments, in reports or presentations, should avoid identifying the sources of the data. This is very important to maintain the privacy of the participants. Although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Thus, all participants in this study were promised that the information obtained from them would be kept confidential to maintain their privacy. This code of confidentiality was extended to the schools and pseudonyms were ascribed to them. Moreover, the town in which these schools are situated has not been named; otherwise the schools would have been easily identifiable due to the nature of their intake. Denscombe and Aubrook (1992) also made a valid point about the avoidance of undue intrusion.

A researcher should not intentionally misrepresent information or gaining unreasonable access to data for the purpose of research. Any sort of deception to people or place of study should be avoided. There should be no prejudice based on race, gender, class, faith, political position. Data pertaining to specific individuals remained available to them and only I had access to their data in this raw form. However, it is indeed impossible to ensure that the data laid open for a reader's perusal would not be used in unfavourable ways. The ultimate responsibility lies with the readers, policy-makers to use the data in ways, which assure the collective benefits of the wider population. This would preserve opportunities for future fieldwork for others who may come to conduct another research.

The abovementioned three key ethical issues are fairly subjective. In this regard, Babbie (1995:75) argues "violations are sometimes justified by arguing that risks to subjects are outweighed by benefits to society". Whatever the case, the ethnographer is obliged to protect the participants from any psychological, physical and social harm that might be caused in the written report. It is the researcher's responsibility since they make decisions.

I have learnt that the challenges of ethnographic fieldwork are centred on the issues of search for knowledge and ethical problems (Hume and Mulcock, 2004). Researchers must adjust their levels of involvement and participation, should the ethical issues arise in the field. The mastery of this naturalistic data generation method comes with the lessons learned and experiences gained from the field. Given the fact that in overt participant observation the search for truth is often at odds with the conformity to conventional research ethics, this fieldwork not only drew me closer to the ways faith is manifested in school, but also offered me an excellent opportunity for reflexive research practice. On one hand, my participation in schools' activities helped me to understand teachers' experiences; on the other hand, it allowed me to enrich the data by adding emotional depth to my work (Smith and Kornblum, 1996). Although the research process of ethnography is challenging and difficult, the outcome of such work has proven its worth and benefit. Ethnography is both a process and a product. As I reflect on the experience of participant observation, especially on how to balance the search for truth and the ethical challenges that often co-exist in parallel in ethnographic sensitive research, I come to realise that there may be

no easy or universal solutions for the inherent problems of this unique field method.

Regardless of the ethical challenges I encountered in the field, the two integrated ethnographic data generation methods made a complementary contribution to this research. Looking back over this fieldwork experience, I feel that in sensitive research, participant observation should not be simply measured and judged by the same ethical guidelines for consent interviews. Rather, a great emphasis should be placed on how to handle unavoidable ethical challenges and unexpected situations in the field. From this research I have learned that in sensitive research, ethical challenges exist and are not easy to resolve.

### **5.13. Data Analysis**

“Data analysis is the process of organizing and storing data in light of your increasingly sophisticated judgments, that is, of the meaning-finding interpretations that you are learning to make about the shape of your study” (Glesne, 1999:132).

Data analysis is defined by Marshall and Rossman (1995:111) as “the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data”. This research involved an ongoing data analysis that began from the first day of the data generation process. In qualitative research, data collection is not something easily separated from data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Silverman (2006:113) suggests that, “the world never speaks directly to us, but is always encoded via recording instruments like field notes and transcripts”. What we hear and see is mediated by such processes. Coffey and Atkinson (1996:9) regard analysis as the “systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships”. It is a way of transforming the data through interpretation. According to Wolcott (1988), the raw data is to be coded, recorded and summarised so that, what the ethnographer ends up with are much more concise generations of ‘crushed’ data. This implies bringing order to raw data, summarising it then discovering patterns and themes. Hence, analysis turns raw data into results which describe what happens during the course of study, and

then the interpretation of the data is discussed leading to implications for further research. Therefore, data analysis started with the first contact between the researcher and the participants during the field study. Interviews, focus groups, observation and school documentations were all labelled for both schools (appendix 4).

When analysing the data, at the first instance, I had prepared and managed the data based on the general guidelines proposed by many researchers, for example, Miles and Huberman (1994), suggest three main stages in analysing raw data in qualitative research. The first stage is data management, in which researchers organise data for systematic data generation, storage and retrieval. This process includes firstly editing, correcting, typing up notes, or transcribing and translating; and secondly, formatting, cross-referring, indexing, and paginating the data in notebooks or computers. The second stage is data reduction, in which researchers begin with reading documents or transcripts, and taking notes to facilitate thinking. The third stage is data display, which refers to the organised assembly of information to enable the drawing of conclusions.

I transcribed the audio-recorded observations, interviews and focus groups leaving space for making notes and writing categories. Also after each interview and focus group, I did an initial analysis to get a broader sense of the nature of the data. To achieve this initial analysis, I used different techniques like: post-interview analysis notes and initial reading of interview transcripts and field notes (Maxwell, 1996). At the initial stage I used paper and pencil, I made notes on hard copies of all transcribed data which appeared relevant and interesting. I examined interview and focus group transcripts to reveal the ways in which the participants made sense of their experiences. All data transcripts and school documentations were scrutinised for: “any interesting patterns ... (searching for) whether anything stands out as surprising or puzzling; how the data relate to what one might have expected on the basis of common-sense knowledge, official accounts, or previous theory; and whether there are any apparent inconsistencies or contradictions among the groups or individuals, or between people’s expressed beliefs or attitudes and what they do” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:178). I then read the hard copies of the data again and used different coloured pens to code various units of meaning. As well as re-visiting previous interview transcripts, the supporting sources of data such as field notes

and notes on informal discussions with participants helped to expand on the unites of meaning. It is worth mentioning here that although there are several computer software packages available for qualitative data analysis (Tesch, 1990); I opted for manual analysis by hand. I believe that interacting directly with the data through manual analysis makes it more meaningful. Qualitative data contains direct quotations of the participants' views, feelings and knowledge (Patton, 1990) which are indiscernible by the computer programs.

Due to the huge amount of data, this early analysis helped to reduce the problem of data overload by selecting out significant features for later analysis (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Reading through all transcribed data many times and using codes assisted in systemising my categories (Robson, 1993). Those categories helped me to sort out and reduce the data into a manageable size and provided me with an important starting point for analysing emerging patterns and relationships (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). They also enabled me to quickly find, pull and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As the analysis proceeded, it was very important to formalise and systematise my thinking into a coherent set of themes and sub-themes. This was done through using the categories to building a list of broad themes, under each, a set of conclusions and findings were stated. Since the generated themes were initially descriptive, I continuously re-examined the data in an effort to make them more conceptual. The main aim of the analysis, as suggested by Merriam (1998), is to understand the research situation, to find what theory accounts for it, and to make sense/meaning of the data. Care was taken not to impose my expectations on the data and to let the categories or the themes emerge from the data.

According to Ladson-Billings (2000) CRT is useful in understanding education inequity. In accordance with the nature of this research, it was found beneficial to use CRT along with feminist theory as theoretical framework for data analysis tool. Quotes and responses of participants are linked with these theories to support the findings and build up the real arguments. In combination, CRT and feminist theories allowed me to evoke personal, professional, and cultural ideas to illuminate issues of race, class, and gender in education research and to create possibilities for reform in primary schools in relation to faith, cultural, social and leaning action. More recently, CRT has proven an important analytic tool in offering critical perspectives on race, and the causes, consequences and

manifestations of race, racism, inequity, and the dynamics of power and privilege in schooling (Taylor *et al.*, 2009).

Gillborn, an eminent researcher into race/racism in education including ethnographic research on racism in classrooms has explained the nature of racism in educational policy and practice. Gillborn (2008) points out that CRT offers a systematic and perceptive framework for understanding race inequity in education. School observations and interviews compelled me to respond with empathy; CRT compelled me to respond intellectually. Although it would be hyperbole to identify racism as the sole cause, it would be irresponsible to deny completely the presence and influence of racism. As such, CRT has been used to expose the forces of silence in term of race and racism and ultimately bring more equality to education. Similarly, feminist theory deserves its place in this research because of the areas on which the research focuses and the manner in which it employs its findings as well as on my insight. The views of feminist scholars have clearly played an important role in helping to understand and challenge systems of inequality in many of its varied forms and played important tools for understanding other manifestations of feminist critiques of racism (Stanley and Wise, 1993).

#### **5.14. Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter, the characteristics of ethnography have been outlined including the philosophical views. Methodological aspects of ethnography have been explored. Ethnographic method has been discussed highlighting and examining debates regarding ethnography. Methodological debates about ethnography are concerned with the absence of quantification, whereas proponents of ethnographic method claim that quantification may lead to the adoption of measurement techniques that distort what researchers are intending to capture. It is common that educational researchers face such debates and struggle to find solutions to these problems. In general it is acknowledged that with any research approach, there are shortcomings. However, an ethnographic study is the most appropriate approach for it enables immersion and opportunities to make sense of 'culture' and 'ethos'.

## Chapter 6

### School Policy and Values: Rhetoric or Reality?

#### 6.1. Introduction

In accordance with the nature of this research which explores the ways in which faith is manifested in two primary schools, it was found beneficial to use CRT as the theoretical framework for data analysis (see chapter 4). Discussing CRT in relation to this ethnography is significant as it illuminates the complicated nature of racism, intolerance and being othered (Ryan and Dixson 2006). Similarly, Yosso (2005) argued that CRT is a framework which could examine and challenge how race and racism implicitly and openly impact on education settings. According to Dixson and Rousseau (2006) CRT is particularly helpful in analysing how othered practices are manifested in everyday schools routine.

Two major themes have emerged which have been organised in to two chapters, and several sub-themes within. This chapter provides rich description and discussion of the first major theme which is: school policy and values: rhetoric or reality? Its sub-themes are:

1. Fostering religious commitment
  - a. Christian festival
  - b. Other festivals
2. School space and boundaries
  - a. *Halal* kitchen
  - b. Assemblies
  - c. Displays
  - d. Prayer room
3. Discipline and Respect
4. School ethos

The names of CRT's authors used in this chapter for analytical tools are: Dixson, Delgado, Gillborn, Ladson-Billings, Rousseau, Solorzano, Stefancic, Tate and Yosso, and the rest of references are from various literature and literature review chapters. Policy and value are intertwined in this research as school documents (for example behaviour, dress code and RE policies) address school



values such as friendship, respect for others, equality, co-operation, discipline, tolerance, as well as no racism, no bullying or bad language. School values can also be presented through displays, activities and staff.

Examining school documents as well as responses from school members, children's focus groups and field notes (see sections 5.7); it seems that there is a mismatch between school policy and the day-to-day running of the school. Such argument is analysed and discussed in the following sub-themes to discover if school policies and values are rhetoric or reality.

## **6.2. Fostering Religious Commitment**

The DfES (2003) argues that all children should be able to achieve their potential, regardless of their ethnic and cultural background and whichever school they attend. Similar, Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005) emphasise the importance of encouraging tolerance amongst children; however, forthcoming subthemes reveal the extent of the two schools fostering religious commitments. Below is an extract from year 5 children's focus group in St. Liam's school (F3L):

R: what celebrations do you have?

Ch2: well we have celebrations....like Father Christmas party!

Ch1: And Miss told us a story about loads of animals

R: Do you remember the festival?

Ch2: No! But it had lots of animals

Ch3: We don't celebrate Eid

Ch1: What's Eid?

Ch2: It's like Father Christmas

Ch3: No silly, we don't have Father Christmas

R: Any other celebrations?

Ch1: We have birthday parties!

The above extract appears to indicate lack of fostering religious comments and could demonstrate how religious activities within both schools were delivered without targeting children's potential in terms of knowledge and understanding. This seems to have led to confusion and tension amongst children as highlighted above (F3L). Berkeley (2008) argues that faith schools should place more emphasis on developing religious awareness as a means of encouraging

pupils to have better understanding of other faiths and ready to live with others in lively, happy and high achieving communities. In this context the DfES (2003) highlighted that all children should be able to achieve their potential, regardless of their ethnic and cultural background and whichever school they attend. Similarly RE was often overlooked (twice a month on average) due to other classroom activities, also as stated by the foundation stage coordinator in Beale School T1B “Unfortunately it’s sad but RE does get put to one side when we have other activities”. Therefore, when asking teachers in St. Liam’s during interviews about RE lesson plans they struggled to provide answers about the taught/current topics, for example; T4L “well let me see...we’ve been looking at different religions...just all the different ones, the ones that are important” and a teacher in Beale School (T2B) mentioned “last term we looked at, hang on...actually let me get the RE syllabus out!”. Such statements are further explained in the forthcoming sections.

### **6.2.1. Christian Festivals**

Although Christmas is celebrated every year in Beale and St. Liam’s School, it does pose the question of what Christmas is really about and how the schools interpret Christmas celebrations. Observations in Beale School (O11B) indicated that “as soon as you walk into the school there’s a huge Christmas tree, Christmas decorations covering the entrance and walls, hymn songs playing in the background and nativity dolls on the windows. I thought to myself, it’s definitely Christmas and you certainly can’t miss it! The atmosphere in the school has certainly changed and it seems more cheerful. Children regardless of religious beliefs appeared to be excited by the decorations and some even singing along to Christmas songs”. Children in both schools appear to enjoy the festive spirit however, when asked about what they do in school during Christmas focus group 4 (F4B):

Ch1: For Christmas, we always have a tree up and get to decorate it with lights, dress up as Santa

Ch2: treats, crackers and pull...pass the parcel and eat chocolate, yum yum.

(F2L):

Ch3: well we normally have a Christmas party.

Ch2: yes we do Christmas cards, we decorate the Christmas tree,

Ch3: we do a Play – just have a fun time.

From the aforementioned responses, it can be argued that children link Christmas celebrations in schools to colouring and decorations, and not the religious message of the Bible promoting tolerance, peace and love. Baasher (1982) argued that the religious and spiritual dimensions are among the most important factors that shape human experience, beliefs and values. In St. Liam's School I observed only the major Christian festivals being acknowledged, such as Christmas, Easter and Christingle. However, observing different classes and having various informal conversations with teachers and TAs during those festivals it was realised that some children were only involved in a Christmas play and art and craft activities, but were scarcely informed about the meanings of those festivals in classes or during RE lessons. A whole school assembly was at many times dedicated to briefly mention the upcoming event with no follow up discussions For example focus group 1 in St. Liam's School (F1L):

R: How about celebrations?

Ch2: Christmas

Ch3: We have a Christmas play

Ch2: Eid?

Ch3: Yes, we have the fun day but people who celebrate Eid go.

R: Oh you mean they're not in school?

Ch2: yes

Ch3: last year we had that assembly about Chinese animals

Ch1: heheheh....you mean Chinese New Year

R: did you do any work in class about Chinese New Year?

Ch3 and Ch2: no

Ch1: just miss read us the story in the assembly

Similarly, another example of when the two schools appeared to devalue religious festivals was during Easter and Lent where no considerable attention was given to such events. Celebrating Easter and Lent according to Christianity reflects the foundation of the Christian faith which implies living with hope and is about repentance as well as spiritual discipline (Grogan and Mosley, 2006). However, I observed that such religious message seemed not to be fully emphasised in both schools and schools' culture, for example observations in St. Liam's as a faith school "Easter was introduced as a cheerful festival with brief reference to 'new beginnings' but no reference to religious meanings of hope and forgiveness" (O23L). Whereas in Beale School Easter was discussed with concise indication about the real concept of such festival "the teacher talked

in length about Easter eggs and chocolate and read a short story about the Easter rabbit” (O19B). It can be assumed that such information may not provide children with the potential message of faith. More so, during interviews, only three teachers talked about Easter or Lent. However, nearly all children alluded to them although they had misconceptions and confusions about the festivals, for example in F1B:

R: what is Easter about?

Ch1: like Easter Eggs

Ch3: and little chicks!

Ch1: and little Easter bunnies

Ch2: I don't get Easter eggs

Ch1: I get lots of chocolates

Ch2: miss sometimes gives us eggs to eat.

This emphasises the mismatch between schools' RE policy (D1B and D1L) which notes RE's objectives and practice. Through celebrating festivals, Brown (2003) believed that it is important to think about what knowledge children are developing as a means of preparing them to live with principles of hope and spiritual discipline. According to Cush (2013) RE is essential as it prepares children to live and work with others who may have different beliefs, values or customs. In reality, field notes, highlighted that children appeared very confused about the Easter Celebration and unsure between the connections of eggs and chicks to the celebration. Also a bilingual assistant in St. Liam's School revealed that "here in this school I haven't seen them teach principles of Christianity. They take them to Church maybe once and that's it" (M2L). An OfSTED report (HMSO, 2010:12) highlighted that while Christianity received more attention than other religions, it was often incoherent: "pupils' understanding of Christianity, while deeper in some respects compared with their understanding of other faiths, was often unsystematic and confused". According to Krause (2003) schools should be teaching about religion and not promoting it, therefore, if the approach is objective and sensitive, neither promoting nor inhibiting religion, it can foster understanding and mutual respect for differences in beliefs. Similarly, Short (2002) believes that, as long as schools understand the differences between learning about religion and promoting religiosity, then faith schools may contribute to social cohesion.

T3B affirms that “We always ensure that the big festivals are celebrated, we’ll have the Christmas festival and children get excited about it. We have a chance to go off timetable and organise many activities for the children, make cards and hats”, however, as shown by the above example there seems to be little explanation of the meanings behind the Christmas or Easter story presented to the children. According to Krause (2003), children taught about religion are more likely to develop self-control and work with peers with respect. Furthermore, teaching about Christianity would provide opportunities for a dynamic curriculum and deepening pupils’ engagement with one another (Fancourt, 2012). Although, the two schools appeared to be carrying out activities around the Christmas theme, the religious connotation of Christmas was not explored and discussed with children. This in turn could help children’s understanding about other religions and thus impact on their behaviour. Such emphasises the mismatch between schools’ value and practice.

Similarly, in St. Liam’s: “year one class teacher planned an Easter egg hunt for the children. Eggs were hidden around the classroom and the small hall, but the teacher only introduced the activity and what children were going to do. There were no links made to the religious purpose of this activity and certainly no connections made between Easter eggs and the Easter celebrations” (O22L). According to the National Curriculum (NC), religious education contributes to children becoming confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives (DfES, 1999). However, Fancourt (2012) suggested that the criticism noticed about teaching Christianity in school was not that insufficient time was being spent on it, but rather that the time spent was unstructured. School’s interpretation and application of such religious festivals appears not to target such objectives and affirms the mismatch between schools’ value and practice.

Similar to Beale School, observations suggested that although, St. Liam’s spent more time on Christmas activities, Christmas play and the celebrations always take place annually and on time, the school is confused about what information and in how much depth Christmas should be discussed due to the large number of Muslim children. “In classrooms, children appear to be doing various arts and craft activities focused around Christmas decorations and cards. Those are then used to decorate classroom walls and corridors and at the end of the term, children are allowed to take them home. RE lessons are at most times used to

continue with the Christmas decorations with little or no explanations of how the art work links to Christmas. Also assemblies will present the biblical story related to Jesus' birth but not in great depth" (O10L). Similarly, the OfSTED report (HMSO, 2010) singled out concerns regarding pupils' understanding of Jesus' significance for Christians. From the CRT point of view, Gillborn, (2005) argues that racism may not be a planned and deliberate goal of education policy, but it is not accidental either. Therefore, the fact that both schools appeared not to be fully explaining about Christmas, how it may or not link to other religions and excluding some children on the basis of race is not a sign of direct or deliberate racism. It is likely to be lack of knowledge on the importance of RE on children's relationship (see section 1.1) and teacher's knowledge and confidence in delivering such topics to a multi-faith audience. Consequently impacting on school's ability to foster religious commitments. Conversations with children in Beale School who watched and took part in the Christmas play suggested that they were unable to comprehend the message of the play for example, F3B:

Ch2: oh yeah I was in the play,

Ch3: well we celebrate Christmas all over the world.

Ch2: I don't! I just like Father Christmas.

Ch3: eee you believe in Father Christmas....he doesn't exist!

Ch1: you have to believe in Santa if you're a Christian.

Similarly, children in St. Liam's (F4L) commented on the nativity as follows:

Ch3: In the Christmas play I was one of the wise men

Ch1: And you get to dress up but you have to learn your lines 'cos you don't want the kids to laugh at you

R: what is the play about?

Ch3: It about Jesus and Mary and how they couldn't get a place to stay.

Ch1: and there was a donkey and sheep in the stables.

Ch2: I wanted to play Joseph

Ch3: You can't it's not allowed, 'cos you're a Muslim and you don't believe in Jesus

Ch2: We do!

Ch3: But you don't have Christmas, so you can't be in the play.

The above two examples appear to indicate children's ability of discussing characters and props of the play with no real understanding of the nativity. Similarly, it seems that an emphasis has been placed on children memorising

the play script rather than explaining the values behind the story. Celebrating Christmas should provide children with information about other religious celebrations, and teach integration and respect (Braspenning, 2010). Responses obtained through teacher interviews have revealed concerns about teaching or discussing the Christmas story. In both schools children spent a lot of time drawing and colouring pictures and making Christmas decorations. Teachers spent little time on explaining the message about Christmas as they appeared worried about how to deliver the topic in an adequate manner taking into consideration the feelings of other children. T4L noted that “I do feel more aware not to just go on about Christmas too much because not everybody does celebrate it or when I’m teaching units on the Bible, I think how do Muslim children feel listening to this, do they think ‘oh I don’t want to hear it’ or ‘I shouldn’t be listening to this’. So it makes me more aware, I wouldn’t like to upset anybody.” Similarly, when I asked T1L about how festivals were celebrated she mentioned “through discussion with the children. So they get the opportunity to talk about it” (T1L) however, she added that “it depends on teachers and how much time and faith in themselves to talk about it”. Talking with children from different religious backgrounds highlighted some misconceptions about religions and confusion about Christmas. The discussion below (F3B) in Beale School which took place between two Muslim children (Ch1 and Ch2) and one Christian child (Ch3), reveals children’s confusion with regards to Christmas and some of the issues with the way in which the school is fostering religious commitments:

R: Do you enjoy the times you do celebrations in school?

Ch2: yeah

Ch3: I’m not bothered – only like the presents at Christmas.

Ch1: Miss, you know this is true, when its Christmas, its Jesus’ birthday, but the kids aren’t bothered about the story, they just want the presents

Ch3: trust me, my Nan makes me pray. I’m too busy to pray

Ch1: I always pray, I just prayed my 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> one today

Ch3: but that’s because you believe in heaven and hell.

Ch2: so why do you celebrate Christmas?

Ch3: it’s something to do with Santa Clause and we have to have a Christmas tree

Ch1: heheheh see I told you it’s about presents

Ch3: don’t you get presents at Christmas?

Ch2: we don’t celebrate Christmas, we’re Muslims

Ch3: what do you celebrate then?

Ch1: Eid!

According to Everington (1996) religious practices, should inspire children at schools to understand the common grounds and values amongst religions, through comparing and contrasting. In this context, Francis (2000) believed that young children with religious practices had better self-control, social skills and approaches to learning than children with non-religious practices. Types of values and norms that circulate in religious congregations are significant and tend to be helpful in adjusting their behaviour (*ibid*). As a child born, raised and educated in a religious environment, in addition to learning about other religions in secondary school, I believe that RE can positively impact on behaviour and attitude (see section 1.2). Although in Beale and St. Liam's School, teachers talked about how the school uses Christmas time to explain similarities between Christians and Muslims "it's good to link stories from the Bible and the Quran. I always try to involve the children and get them to explain to me about the teachings of the Quran and their faith and maybe how it relates. I always try to get the message across that whether it's the Quran, Bible or Torah" (T3L), during the two years' classroom observations of various year groups, only on two occasions have teachers ever briefly crossed linked other faiths. Also consider the fact the Eid was hardly discussed as a topic of its own with children, thus limiting opportunities of comparisons. This raises the question of dominant ideology discussed by a number of CRT theorists (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Gillborn, 2005). They believed that religious dominance would often lead to discrimination and disadvantaging ethnic minorities. For example Solorzano *et al.* (2000) used CRT as a framework to analyse the educational inequities and barriers for Latino students. Dominant beliefs can create unfairness and discrimination amongst students (*ibid*).

Additionally, Christingle represents the message of love; hope and supporting others who need God's love (Grogan and Mosley, 2006). However, this message appeared to have been weakened with how St. Liam's celebrated Christingle. The school arranged for all children to visit the Church and listen to the service explaining Christingle by the vicar, except for children of different faiths. They were spread around the school with TAs supervising them while they watched a film or coloured pictures. This seemed to be a form of inequality where children would take part in a service outside school, yet non-Christians



were excluded from sharing the same experience and information and arguably deprived from the benefits of this celebration. Although this could be seen as a misguided attempt from the school, discrimination cannot be ruled out, as scholars of CRT such as Tate (2005) asserted that critical analysis and an understanding of the moral and spiritual practices is essential to question the workings of racism and other forms of marginalisation in schools. Hence, it could be argued that such practices have perhaps isolated one group from the other, potentially hindering positive relationships amongst children of different faiths. This could lead to bullying incidents, which was reminiscent to my primary and secondary school experience (see sections 1.3 and 1.4).

Furthermore, CRT could criticise the school's decision in the above incident as only Christian children were allowed to attend the service. In light of the tenet which critique liberalism (Ladson-Billings, 2000), CRT would argue that white privilege were valued in contrast to ethnic minority children who were deprived from sharing the same experience as their peers and were given insufficient attention in school. This could have had an impact not only on children, but on the community as a whole. In this context, DCSF (2007) emphasised that community cohesion, implies working towards a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds is appreciated and valued (see section 3.5). This report argues that educational opportunities should be available for all to build a strong, positive relationship amongst children. Additionally, when ethnic minorities celebrated their festivals, no visits to Temples or Mosques were planned (see section 7.3), which may lead to further gaps between religions (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Jackson and Fujiwara (2007) claim that religion has often been a frame to marginalise various groups, therefore, believe that religious festivals need be celebrated without excluding; otherwise religion could be viewed as a tool of repression.

### **6.2.2. Other Festivals**

Through celebrating festivals, the main argument which needs to be addressed is - whether both schools foster community cohesion and promote good race and inter-faith relations (Osler, 2007). Evidence obtained through participants' interviews, focus groups, observations and school documentations has revealed another example of the mismatch between policy and values and practice. In accordance with CRT, group differences relating to gender, religion, nationality,

and others (Razack, 1999; Schiele, 2007), hence adopting its framework in data analysis has shed light on schools' explicit misinterpretation of fostering religious commitments. One of the more interesting developments in CRT is a questioning of how certain groups are considered as an othered category (see section 4.2.4). I observed a number of what seems to be othered treatments during festivals such as Eid, Ramadan, Diwali and Chinese New Year. The RE curriculum in both schools emphasise that children are taught and given the chance to develop their knowledge and understanding of various religious festivals. However, in both schools I observed that children of other faiths (e.g. Muslims) were not given opportunities to celebrate their festivals fairly and justly. For example in Beale School, only the second Eid was regarded in the first year of observations and nothing was organised or discussed for neither Eids in the second year. A bilingual assistant (M3B) during her interview genuinely believed that the reason for lack of Eid activities is due to the schools financial incapability "but we only do an Eid party for the big Eid because it's costly and the school can only budget for one". Such practices and additional examples discussed below illuminate the mismatch between school's values and practice and how policies are becoming empty rhetoric. Although after my data generation, the Equality Act 2010, affirmed that it is unlawful for any education provider to discriminate between pupils on grounds of disability, race, sex, gender, religion or belief. Therefore, schools have an important role to play in sustaining and encouraging religious diversity.

Similarly, during observations in St. Liam's School, Islamic festivals were neither celebrated nor acknowledged and Eid parties were absent. No posters or displays were put up relating to the Muslim festivals except for an old piece of A4 paper with "Happy Eid" printed on it. When I enquired about the poster, a bilingual assistant highlighted that "it was printed three years ago and every year the school hangs the A4 paper by the reception. In school children love talking about Islam, but they don't have many opportunities to do so. There are no assemblies or anything for it [Eid]. I suppose because it's a Church school, so it's more powerful" (O16L). When I asked a TA (M1L) about what the school has done to accommodate the Muslim children he could only state "well children are off school tomorrow for Eid and that's accepted" and the year 6 teacher (T2L) highlighted "because my knowledge wasn't great, so I had to research it. I mean, hand on heart, I could've done more. But we did more this year than we did last year." By this comment T2L is referring to the Eid cards which children did when

I observed her class during the second year of the ethnography (O26L). T2L highlighted that she gained knowledge of different faiths from RE lesson in her secondary school “it was a long time ago and could certainly do with refreshing and updating!” (T2L). Similarly T3L stated “I did a GCSE RE I think you learn bits from that, but as far as I can recall we did a little bit of RE on the PGCE but it wasn’t something that we really got trained on”. It would be very challenging for teachers to teach young children of diverse backgrounds when perhaps their knowledge of various religions and cultures are limited. Such responses could indicate the need for courses/workshops focusing of faith diversity and for teachers to attend and take part in (see section 8.4.4). Evidence above also seems to suggest that alongside teachers’ lack of religious understanding, promoting multiple religious activities and a shared sense of belonging is the most challenging aspect of faith schools. This mirrors my experiences and feelings in both primary and secondary faith school as I was never encouraged to feel part of the school community (see sections 1.3 and 1.4).

Above examples could be understood as Islamophobic actions as there appears to be certain levels of prejudices and anxiety (Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2007), in both schools with regards to Islamic festivals and teachers perhaps lack sufficient knowledge and confidence to teach about faiths (see section 3.7). Additionally, CRT argues that due to faith schools being established to fostering a specific faith identity, other children of different faiths could be at risk of being excluded (Gillborn, 2006). Similarly, it is denying children access to faith diversity in a multicultural community which is against the value and ethos of both schools. Given the common nature of this issue, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) suggest the occurrence and effects of this problem are often invisible to people with faith privileges. Furthermore, marginalising a group of children may create misconceptions about religions as Gates (2005) stated that religion is an area in which issues of racism could be tackled. Since schools are at the heart of promoting equality, it can be argued that it is of vital significance that there is the collective responsibility of school staff to provide children with adequate knowledge, thereby creating an environment to enrich rather than hindering children’s understanding.

Both Eids were only briefly pointed out in classrooms and one assembly was delivered during my second year of observation. After gaining approval from the headteacher, a newly appointed Muslim bilingual assistant planned the

assembly. She felt disheartened by school's lack of interest in discussing or planning anything for Islamic festivals "And by the way, if I hadn't suggested to them to do the talk about Eid, they wouldn't have done it themselves" (M2L). Although she had mentioned her ideas for the assembly to many teachers, none of them gave her directions or asked to see her PowerPoint Presentation. During observations, I noticed that none of the teachers or the headteacher attended the assembly. This may imply a racist attitude which is informed and reflected through the unjust practises carried out by school headteacher and school's staff. Based on the view of CRT, Gillborn (2008) affirms that the cultivation of particular practices/behaviours such as lack of involvement or recognition of others within school's functions contributes to the formation of exclusions. CRT's tenet (critique of liberalism) would also challenge this form of liberalism, as the school appears to foster religious commitments through the assembly, but in reality it all appears superficial as they provided no support for the bilingual assistant during the process and none of the teachers attended or acknowledged such an event. Moreover, field notes revealed that that the bilingual assistant "was very eager and enthusiastic about providing children with knowledge of the Islamic festival, but as I watched the assembly I soon realised that the language used was very sophisticated and not aimed at young children. They quickly lost concentration, began to misbehave and could not understand the bilingual assistant" (O18L). So although an assembly was provided, yet due to lack of school's help in supervising/editing the presentation and language used, it appeared little benefit was gained as highlighted in children's focus group (F2L):

R: Did you learn a lot from it (the Eid's assembly)?

All; No,

Ch3: not really

Ch2: the words were really hard.

Ch1: she was talking fast

Similarly, the Eid party in Beale Schools was organised and planned by the Muslim TAs and bilingual support assistants, however, teachers' lack of involvement in the rehearsals was apparent and it seemed some were unaware of what children were rehearsing. From observations it was noted that teachers rarely asked about the preparations, watched rehearsals, commented on the planning or discussed the party with children in class. However, there were contrasting observations made during the Christmas festival where the

headteacher and school teachers were involved, knew about the rehearsals and used lesson times to practise with children. Bilingual assistant M3B affirmed during the interview: “oh no we plan it all, teachers don’t have time! Parents give us ideas, which are fantastic, then me and other three Muslim sisters organise the whole party.” M4B also stated that “teachers know that children are practising for the play, but they don’t allow them to rehearse at lesson times as they did for Christmas play, so we have to practise at play time and dinner time”. Data analysis which indicated lack of teacher involvement in the festivals, contradict the view of the Home Office (2001a) which encouraged a shared sense based on common values, respect for religious difference and rights and obligations of school members working together for the common good. CRT would critique this as an example of racism which is embedded in school practices and events in unnoticed ways (Yosso, 2006). One of the objectives set by the former New Labour government for faith education was to bring faiths cross the ethnic groups (Miles and Brown, 2003), however, I observed that the school appears not to provide the chance for ethnic minority children to practice their faiths effectively. This is supported by Garrod (2003) who is of the opinion that faith schools will hinder race equality if they recognise the value of pupils of only one faith.

Moreover, teacher interviews alluded to the importance of celebrating various festivals for example; T4B, “We look at Diwali, Chinese New Year. And a lot of it is in the RE syllabus” however, field notes from Beale School highlighted that proper explanation and discussions were missing from classrooms and RE lessons. “Children in year 5 had the chance to decorate lanterns with no proper explanation of the connection between the art work and the story of Rama and Sita” (O9B). The message of Diwali as a religious festival reflecting the Hindu faith emphasise that light will conquer darkness, goodness will overcome evil, and that good people will prosper (Bailey, 2001; Grogan and Mosley, 2006). This concept appeared not to have been fully recognised and explained as a means for children to develop an understanding of the values of this festival. Hence the concept of being othered in CRT noted by Yosso, (2006) was reflected in the school’s practices. In light of CRT tenets, multiethnic children being othered is likely to lead to faith discrimination arising from the intolerance that is inevitably associated with prejudice stemming from ignorance of other faiths (Dixson and Rousseau, 2006).

Similarly, the concept of othered was also apparent in celebrating the Chinese New Year in St. Liam's School where "children focused on art work around Chinese flowers, writing, masks, clothes and dragons" (O12L). However, the legend of how the Chinese came to name their years and the customs associated with Chinese New Year have not been fully explained to enable children gain an appreciation of ethnic diversity. Such are examples of school policy and values becoming empty rhetoric. According to Lander (2014:94) "teachers need to have the courage to move beyond" what is usually planned and taught, for example the repetitive art work for Diwali and Chinese New Year or the Eid party with samosas. Additionally, insignificant emphasis was placed on this celebration compared to the Christmas festival. In this context, Osler and Starkey, (2006) pointed out that although children attending faith schools are normally given the chance to celebrate their festivals it was realised that focusing on promoting a particular faith is not necessarily well equipped to prepare their children for diversity (see section 3.3). Additionally, in an interview, T3L claimed "I treat all children the same." However, it is not a matter of treatment - being treated equally does not mean being treated the same (Anderson, 1988). It is the question of which celebrations and religious festivals are being fostered, acknowledged and taught. When all pupils are treated the same, schools, although unintentionally so, are racist in their practices (*ibid*). Thus, it is important to contemplate and address the impact of teaching about faiths on children as it will assist teachers to develop and utilise instructional strategies that work in accordance with, rather than against pupils' faiths.

Furthermore, children became very excited and talked extensively about Eid, predicting which day it might be, what they will wear, what presents they are expecting, however, observations revealed that explanations of Eid values were not addressed in classes. No activities were planned for Eid in both schools and children did not have the chance to make Eid cards, hence illustrating school values becoming empty rhetoric. Children in both schools were very much aware of the lack of acknowledgement and teaching of Muslim festivals. In (F2B);

Ch2: when it's Eid, we have an Eid Party...only for one Eid.

Ch1: usually we have a day off,

Ch2: But nothing else.

Additionally, both Muslim and non-Muslims children were aware of and used to regularly compare the differences in school reactions between Eid and Christmas for example, in F2L, Ch2 highlighted that: when it is Christmas, we get chocolate and we should get presents for Eid as well. In F4L, Ch3 affirmed: no, we don't do anything for Eid, only a Christmas play. Also in F1B:

Ch1: we only get one day or two days off for Eid

R: So you do things in lesson about Eid?

Ch2: no, it was just a little party.

Above responses suggest schools' lack of recognition for other religious celebration. Using CRT (Yosso, 2006), children in both schools appear to have been othered and disadvantaged from accessing their own religious festivals. This could be interpreted as racist behaviour (Gillborn, 2008) and may create misunderstanding of other faiths, which is likely to increase friction and disintegration amongst children. For example, following the discussion of the topic on animals in the Chinese calendar "children were making fun of the Chinese story which upset the Chinese child and made him leave the group" (O12L). Similarly, during the 15-day celebration of the Chinese New Year, children receive money in red envelopes for good luck (Davis, 2005) yet in Beale School, when "a Chinese child brought in a red envelope and was delighted and excited about showing her friends, children were disinterested and some boys laughed at the idea. She was upset and cried" (O10B). A further example was the teachers' reaction which was to ask the boys to "leave her alone" and told the Chinese child to wipe her tears. It can be suggested that due to school's lack of acknowledgement of Chinese New Year and what it represents, children were uninformed, thus leading to intolerance and disrespectful behaviour. Moreover, the school lacked in fostering pupils' religious commitment during the Month of Ramadan. In both schools, no assemblies about Ramadan were given prior or during the month to explain why Muslims have to fast. In fact when asking a bilingual assistant about activities for Ramadan she affirmed "no, never, nothing at all. Nothing at all! That's why I suggested to the Head two months ago to give a talk about Ramadan. Then I changed my mind because children can't relate to it now since it's been 5 months since the month of Ramadan" (M2L).

Limiting children's understanding and involvement in religious activities may hinder their preparation for living in a multicultural community. Consequently, it could impact negatively on children delicate sense of tolerance towards

diversity, and according to Smith (2006b) damaging multiethnic children's sense of identity. Schools catering for one specific religion would allow for an increased likelihood of pupils disintegration with each other and limiting their experience of diversity (Brown, 2004). This is how Cohen, (2005) believes faith schools are justifying social division and segregation. Examples above reflect one of the research aims which is to determine the influence of faith on pupils' behaviours and understanding. Similarly, observing various year groups, it was soon realised that teachers have not discussed the concept of Ramadan with their classes and some non-Muslim children were unaware of what it was. During the second focus group (F2B), I asked children about fasting:

Ch1: When we fast, we come to the library

Ch3: and other kids ask what is fasting and Miss Morris tells them we can't eat in Ramadan

Ch2: but you could die if you don't eat

Ch1: heheheh we can eat at night

Ch2: that's not healthy; I would die

The above extract brings to light children's misconceptions about Ramadan. This may suggest a lack of information or explanation provided by the school. More so, it emphasises the importance of talking to children and making them aware of the various religious activities. Although children talked amongst themselves about fasting, Richardson (2005) believes that the school has a duty of presenting the rich diversity within every faith and culture which can enhance understanding and clear any misconceptions. According to Brown (2004) assisting children to develop tolerance for other religions would provide an essential basis for understanding. Even though it may appear that schools have offered children of other faiths limited opportunity to celebrate, yet such offer has been appreciated by children. Focus groups and field notes highlighted the positive effect the Eid party has had on children as they were all very enthusiastic when it was discussed. Encouraging comments were made from both Muslim (Ch2) and non-Muslim (Ch1 and Ch3) alike, for example;

Ch2: I love when we have the Eid Party.

Ch3: I like the music and the food we get, what's that thing called, the triangle one?

Ch2: samosa

Ch3: I like them!

Ch1: yeah and when you all wear the sparkly clothes. (F2B).



And (F4B)

R: How do you feel about the Eid party?

All: Happy

Ch2: but it was dead short, I wish it was longer

Ch1: I get lots of money.

Ch3: we do a fashion show, and parents come.

Ch1: I get to speak in Arabic and read from the Quran

Ch2: yeah that's nice...you'll have to teach me!

Accordingly, Gaine (2005) emphasises that institutions which promote race equality and tackle racism provide a safe and supportive experiences for pupils from black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds as well as white. Nevertheless, during observations in Beale School it has been noted that though the school appeared to foster religious commitment and encouraged inclusiveness, the Eid party was perhaps done for the wrong reasons. Firstly the Eid party did not take place at the same time as the Muslims were celebrating it; it was delayed "until the end of the school term and a week before half term, where it is more convenient for the school. But what's the point Eid has already past and children have forgotten about it" (O12B). Whereas I observed the Christmas nativity and decorations were done on time and lessons were reorganised to allow for creative work and rehearsals. This can create a sense of being othered amongst children as school seems to give more priority to a particular religious festivity over others (Yosso, 2006). Focusing on specific religious events contradicts the school's Effectiveness Policy (D2B) which states "celebrating festivals of diverse faith and cultures". Othering certain festivals are examples of the mismatch between school policies and values which states the importance of "brining different faiths together" (D1B) and its practice which prioritises one faith over others. As a result, this may create division amongst children and other school members as well as distort the concept of fostering religious commitment.

Additionally, when the school's vicar was asked about his opinion regarding Eid festivals, he responded "This is a Christian school so has Christian values at its heart" (M5L). Also when I questioned him about any preparations for Eid day, he was very puzzled and stated "I think they do, pretty sure some kind of provision is made. Different ways to celebrate depending on religion and family. Not easy for a school to say this is what you should do". Similarly when asking the

learning mentor (M1B) about Eid celebrations she responded “we do, but it’s time consuming”. Such attitudes may suggest ignorance, a lack of interest and a sense of disregard to the feelings of a huge number of children from different faiths thereby using CRT tenets this may be viewed as racism. I observed that such negative reactions towards Eid celebration were also apparent in teachers, thus affirming Gillborn’s (2008) argument for racism being deeply embedded to people’s actions. Through CRT, it is believed that racism is endemic; therefore, Solorzano (1998) affirms that such negativity would reproduce anxiety amongst multiethnic children.

Additionally, it was affirmed in Beale School that “During Ramadan, facilities are provided for children who are fasting” (T2B), which in contrast were absent in St. Liam’s School. Observations revealed that the Beale allocated the library for children to access and use as long as an adult was available to supervise them. Teachers continuously talking about a room for fasting children to access when they pleased, however, were careless to the fact that an adult’s supervision was required all time, which led to the room being inaccessible during most times. Some teachers were unaware and others unconcerned about the numerous occasions when the library became unavailable during Ramadan due to no available supervision and student council meetings: T3B “well it’s for health and safety reasons so we can’t have children running around the school with no supervision” and also T4B “teachers are busy at lunch time and we have things to plan so it’s not easy to take the lunch hour off them”. During the two years of observation I recalled 13 times where the bilingual assistant had other commitments and had to ask the children to leave the library and play outside. As affirmed by the bilingual assistant (O2B)

“children usually fill up the prayer room and they come in large numbers and they are all motivated. And as the month goes on they wanted to stay in the prayer room and they wanted to stay in the library, but they couldn’t do that because there’s no teachers to supervise them. So what a shame, having the facility there but not being able to use it.”

Furthermore, observations and conversations with school members suggested that no activities or tasks were planned for the children whilst in the library, thus they resorted to reading books and colouring pictures. A bilingual assistant who supervises children during Ramadan mentioned that “they don’t do anything too

special. They just sit down and they just colour and read and nothing too Islamical” (O2B).

The above is further evidence of policy and values becoming empty rhetoric. Although the RE policy emphasises the importance of providing facilities for children to “freely practise their faith” (D1B) and “cater for religious needs” (D1L), evidences suggested that in both schools, a number of pupils were deprived from fully performing religious commitments. Such is an example of the tenet where CRT critiques liberalism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). CRT criticises this so called liberalism (Gillborn, 2006), as it only serves the schools’ purpose of appearing to cater for multiethnic children. This issue resonates with my experience at secondary school, where an RE classroom was available to Muslim girls only during the month of Ramadan. However, there were no available resources such as prayer mats, Qurans and we faced similar issues of not being allowed in the room without supervision. Such attitude could lead to lack of religious understanding thereby creating conflict amongst children in the society. In this context, Sen (2000) argued that religious exclusion can increase the detachment of groups and individuals from social relations thereby can block the integration of children. Similarly, Silver (2007) pointed out that individuals are often blocked from access to religious opportunities that are normally available to other members of society which according to her are keys to community integration. Therefore, it is imperative for schools to acknowledge the multiple strengths of fostering religious commitment which reflect different faiths as Delgado and Stefancic (2013) confirm that it will serve a larger purpose of struggle toward social and racial justice.

### **6.3. School Space and Boundaries**

This section addresses the second sub-theme which further highlights the mismatch between schools’ rhetoric and reality. It presents evidences with regards to how the schools’ spaces were utilised for religious observances and how faith is manifested within such environment. The data has been examined and CRT framework used to explore and explain how such spaces influence children’s reactions with one another and discusses the boundaries which were created within such spaces, thus othering certain children of different faiths.

### 6.3.1. *Halal* Kitchen

Although both schools have emphasised on many occasions the importance of providing meals suitable for different dietary requirements, as indicated by the year 6 teacher (T2B) “we have a *halal* kitchen, to cater for Muslim and non-Muslim”, during observations of lunch time and from focus groups it has been realised that children commented negatively on the food. For example F1L:

R: what do you think about the school dinner?

Ch2: it’s horrible! Miss, the chicken has blood running down it and everything!

Ch3: It’s gross man! It’s disgusting!

Ch2: We all have the same thing – tuna sandwiches

Ch3: They only have pizza once a year!

Ch1: they don’t have salt on them! And nearly everything is not cooked

Ch3: all they do is take a huge spoon and slap the food on no matter what.

Ch2: and the rice pudding is not even, it’s just slop. It just stays in one place

Ch1: it’s like Slop!

Ch3: and we have to go in alphabetical order, so I’m always last because they started from Z.

Also this is what F2L had to say about school dinner:

All: NASTY!!

Ch3: the only thing that is probably okay, is the fish fingers and sandwiches

Ch2: the chicken has blood rolling down it and was red.

Ch1: Nasty!

Ch3: yeah all the time, its *halal* but it’s not cooked properly

Ch2: we told the school council to tell the headteacher.

Ch1: I don’t like the school dinner, because I’m used to my food at home

And F2B echoed similar feelings:

All: BAD!

Ch2: they should just have a huge big crate of just sandwiches!

Ch3: cos a girl once found a hair in her food

Ch2: and raw blood meat!

Ch1: sometimes we have pizza

Interviewing headteachers to discuss children’s comments, HTB remarked “we cater for children’s needs and do our best to resolve any issues. That’s why

we're an inclusive school". Similarly the headteacher in St. Liam's claimed that the *halal* kitchen caters for Muslim's needs "believe me, it was a good idea to have *halal* kitchen because Muslims are not vegetarians and we always get praised for it [from visitors]" (HTL). However, there appears to be major issues with the school dinner. According to the dinner lady (M4L) "Basically kids don't want to eat the hot dinners, they don't even look to see what it is, they just go straight for the sandwiches and jacket potato. Most of the stuff they don't eat it at home, so they don't want to try it, it's got nothing to do with our food". Also the school cook (M3L) highlighted that "you'll never please all of them; you do get the fussy eaters. I suppose it's the way that they eat at home, we can't force something on them, I mean most of them don't like roast. But they do usually opt for a sandwich or a jacket potato". However, bilingual assistants felt disheartened when discussing the *halal* food (M3B): "children don't like the food very much. They always have sandwiches. It [*halal* kitchen] looks good on paper, but a lot of people who taste it never ask for it again". Using the tenet of critique liberalism, CRT would strongly attack the school's approach (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Although the headteacher and dinner ladies highlighted that Muslim children need to be catered for, yet it appears that they are not even attempting to resolve issues regarding why children are turning down the *halal* option. Interviews with the school's cook and dinner ladies have revealed that they are in fact aware of the issues regarding the food, but appeared to blame children for being "fussy eaters". Ladson-Billings, (2000) refutes school's claims toward objectivity, as both schools appear to be taking for granted the fact that school has a *halal* kitchen by name (rhetoric), without considering concerns raised by teachers and children (reality).

Although staff in both schools have continuously noted how having a *halal* kitchen caters for children's needs and religious requirements, in reality, I observed that many teachers, school members and children did not eat or praise it. "Many children have regularly complained about the food to dinner ladies and some have even opted for lunch boxes from home. Dinner ladies have also expressed concerns to teachers about children not eating the hot dinner. But nothing has been done about it!" (O12L). This implies that neither children nor dinner ladies' concerns of have been acted upon hence schools' practises can be under question. Such could be viewed as a serious matter as Delgado and Stefancic (2001) highlight that racism is sometimes deeply entrenched in the social order that it is often taken for granted and viewed as natural. Disregarding

such concerns in an important school space as indicated in above evidences may create boundaries amongst children and imply a sense of being othered. In this respect, CRT places particular importance on the experiences of multiethnic children, therefore, making an especially insightful contribution to deal with racism (Delgado, 1989).

### **6.3.2. Assemblies**

Throughout the two years of observations, it was realised that assemblies were organised around particular themes such as healthy eating, creative minds, Christian festivals and active life. However, it was rare to observe assemblies covering the issue of faiths, tolerance and anti-racism and its effects on children and community. According to Brodie (2005) assemblies are considered as opportunities to explore the meaning and the consequences of 'behaviour' and highlight the importance of promoting tolerance and respect for others.

The outcome of the headteachers' interviews revealed that the focus of assemblies is to deliver messages which are predominantly about Christianity "yes we do, the curate comes in to talk with me and we link themes to the Christian year....it's mostly about the Bible" HTL. Similarly when asking about discussing elements of other faiths HTB replied "yes, it's done but in class assemblies". However, evidences suggested that both schools struggled to talk about other faiths and cultures. Take for example F1B:

Ch2: we have a rewards assembly, were you get stars and awards

Ch1: I've never been picked.

Ch2: oh there is a different type of assembly, one where Miss reads us a story, like the one about Cyber Bullying.

Ch1: and the Christmas assembly

Ch3: on Monday and Wednesday miss reads us a story from the Bible.

Also F1L:

R: what type of assemblies do you have?

Ch2: Music, Hymn Practise

Ch1: hymn practise,

Ch2: School council

Ch1: we have school council assemblies and reward assemblies on Fridays.

R: Which assembly do you enjoy?

Ch1: I enjoy the Hymn practise because some of the songs I already know

Ch1: I like the assemblies Mr Wright tells us stories about his life.

And F3L

R: What sort of Assemblies do you have in school?

Ch3: On Mondays we learn Stories about Jesus.

Ch1: On Tuesday, we do hymn practise

Ch2: but we don't have assemblies on Wednesday and Friday,

CH1: and on Thursday, Miss tells us about Jesus

There seems to be a mismatch between St. Liam's Assembly File (D2L) which outlines the significance of including other "religions and cultures to reflect the school's diversity", and its practice. T2L indicated that "We have messages that we relay to the children. There are passages from the Bible that we may look at, a particular verse". Similarly T4L affirmed that "all [assemblies] are based around Christian teachings and Christian hymns". Although in faith schools, acts of collective worship often reflect the faith of the school, assemblies (which are of a Christian nature) do not reflect any other particular faith that many school children belong to. According to Garrod (2003) race equality will become a challenge in faith schools that only cater for a particular faith. Focusing on one specific religion in assemblies may lead to some children feeling othered by the school. Take for example the statement of the vicar (M5L) in St. Liam's School who remarked:

"Primarily my assemblies talk about Christianity. But if there is a clash of cultures, then because this is a Church School it has to take precedence. For instance it was once suggested to have a Muslim Friday assemblies, I felt that it isn't a good idea because this is a Church school. The signal it would send to the wider community if it became known that this was happening would probably not be appropriate. Particularly that there is a fine balance to be struck there being some white working class families who feel slightly threatened by certain ceremonies you wouldn't want to feed prejudice. I think that kind of thing would probably be misinterpreted".

Gillborn (2009) remarked that CRT is a framework to explore how systems of culture privilege and power are intertwined. The powerful quote above from the

school vicar illustrates Gillborn's point and it also raises several issues of power and racism. Using CRT, white supremacy (see section 4.2.3.4) is visible and the tenet of dominance is apparent through the vicar's position in the school and how ethnic minority's needs are being ignored (Bell, 1995). As a result of being dominant, it could be argued that this has led to signs of racism.

One of the aims of school assemblies is to celebrate the multi-faith make-up of schools and its cultural diversity; however, such is an additional example of policy and values becoming empty rhetoric. In St. Liam's School, no assemblies were delivered in relation to both Eids and Ramadan. Those observations mirror my memory of secondary school as there were no assemblies or talks about Muslim celebrations or festivals (see section 1.4). Despite the fact that there were no children from the Jewish faith in both schools of my research, it is unfortunate that during schools' visits I have not observed any assemblies focusing on Jewish tradition and culture. Although field notes highlighted that schools attempted to talk about the Chinese New Year and Diwali, they lacked in-depth insights to encourage children to share their beliefs and values. Additionally, Beale School has a 'split assembly' on Friday "a Muslim assembly and a non-Muslim assembly....both teachers and children continuously refer to the non-Muslim assembly as the 'Christian assembly'" (O3B), for example F1B:

R: what type of assemblies do you have?

Ch1: Muslim assembly

Ch3: and a Christian assembly.

On the surface, having a split assembly might be seen as beneficial for children, however, a bilingual assistants M3B clarified that "assemblies are completely separate...I think we just need to be a bit more integrated in that sense". Also when asking a learning mentor about the benefits of the split assembly she mentioned "some children are Muslims but don't know anything about Islam, maybe because of parents who have grown up here...But I suppose non-Muslims would also benefit from finding out about other religions" (M1B). It is interesting to see the leaning mentor's misconception about Muslim parents as she justified the split assembly to help children whose parents lack knowledge about Islam. However, such assembly is beneficial for non-Muslim children, not because of their parents' knowledge but due to its informative nature. According to Gillborn (2005) such is a sign of racism however, the learning mentor might not be aware of it as CRT argues that racism is often invisible to people with



racial privileges. Furthermore, focus groups suggested that split assemblies may create confusion amongst children and some might feel othered by it. Similarly, observations highlighted that although; Beale School discussed Eid in the separate Muslim assembly, only Muslim children benefited from the information as children of other faiths did not attend F2B:

Ch2: on Friday, we have a Muslim assembly.

Ch1: the Muslims go in the hall, and learn about Eid, and non-Muslims go to year 1.

Ch2: Why didn't you come?

Ch3: No way! I'm not a Muslim...I'm not allowed to go. I go to the other assembly that is much easier. But it's boring.

Grogan and Mosley (2006) asserted that school assemblies are platforms to motivate, inform or enlighten the children. Assemblies need to highlight today's increasingly diverse community, value religious festivals and reflect on the meaning of tolerance (Lamont, 2012), so that children learn to share their beliefs and views of others (Grogan and Mosley, 2006). According to Lamont (2012) school assemblies should help children understand the Christian faith as well as reflect on elements of other faiths. However, CRT's tenets would contest the school's rhetoric liberalism (Gillborn, 2006), as on the surface there appears to be race neutrality and equal opportunity, but reality is quite the opposite. Thus, via appreciating differences and viewing it as a positive, children will eventually learn to living together in a diverse community rather than feeling othered. Therefore, it is believed that the possibility of learning about other faiths and cultures would create a generalised respect through which social cohesion can be achieved (Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005).

### **6.3.3. Displays**

Historically, little attention has been given to the physical environment in which learning occurred (Atwood and Leitner, 2001). Nevertheless, in recent years researchers have focused on the physical setting of the classroom as having an impact on behaviour. With regards to how the school utilises displays to promote religious values, it was observed that Beale School uses a small corner at the main entrance to display resources related to RE. However, "the exact same resources were used each year for the different festivals, the only difference is the way they were displayed" (O23B). The exact art work, decorations and

books were used every year for Christmas, Eid, Diwali and none of which included children's work. The display was arranged by the headteacher and decorated by TAs after school time, hence lacked children's involvement and contribution. According to Bull and Solity (1989) there is some evidence that pupils' participation in room arrangement affects the behaviour of both pupils and teachers, however, some observations suggested that the school missed this opportunity for children. It was also very rare to see a display focusing on Hinduism and Judaism as the majority of attention was given to Christmas and Easter. Also in St. Liam's School if there was a wall dedicated to a foundation subject, the majority of time, teachers would use it for history, ICT or art. During the two years of observations only 3 display walls were seen which related to RE. Schools' members including headteachers and teachers were not explicitly discriminatory about displays for other faiths, but it was clear through designating displays for a certain religion and neglecting others. Such is an example of the mismatch between policy and practice and CRT would argue that this is a form of racism and being othered (Ryan and Dixson, 2006). Gillborn (2008) claims that racism reflects how the dynamics of power and privilege are portrayed in the field of education and CRT can help to expose it, as is apparent above. Although different approaches have been taken to investigate the issue of racism in schools, Gillborn (2005) believes that an analysis of educational policy in England suggests that policies are actively endorsing the concept of othered.

Moreover, in St. Liam's School it was observed that during the period of the OfSTED inspection, the headteacher, "went personally around the whole school and ensured that a cross was hung in all classrooms, main corridors and assembly halls" (O18L). When I asked the year 2 teacher about the crosses she highlighted that "they're only on the wall for the inspection because we're a Church school, and some teachers will actually take them down once the inspection is over" (T1L). Chambers (1995) highlighted that much of the pressure for using displays and in particular interactive display may come from teachers perceptions and experience of OfSTED inspections. However, according to Severs (2013:4), displays can be used as additional tools to create independent learners and to encourage children to partake in the planning process, "done well, they can be an essential classroom tool but done badly they can be an ineffective waste of time." Therefore, Anderson (2011) affirmed that creating displays can provide an opportunity for children to learn from

each other and to appreciate the work of others, nurturing empathy, respect, and a strong sense of classroom community. Unfortunately in St. Liam's, there was a frenzy of display making during the run up to that inspection, therefore, missing valuable points about displays. In fact according to Dean (2001), classroom displays should give pupils a clear message about the culture of the classroom, the kind of work they will do and what is expected of them.

#### **6.3.4. Prayer Room**

Beale School has been designed with a dome on top of the building (similar to domes on top of Mosques). Directly underneath the dome is a large prayer room for staff and children to use, which is commonly known amongst teachers and children as the 'Mosque' (the headteacher refers to it as the multi-faith room). However, for many years the room has been closed and only used infrequently for rehearsals or group work. Looking inside the room (O2B), "I noticed that it was very dirty and dusty and full of boxes and teaching resources, which could imply that it has been used as a storage space and very much neglected". Children's focus groups also shed some light on this issue F1B:

R: Do you have a prayer room in school?

Ch1&2: Yes for Muslims only.

R: how about the Multi-faith room?

Ch1: heheheh

Ch2: what's that?

R: the room with the dome on top?

Ch1: ohhhh no that's called a Mosque, but we don't use it anymore.

Ch2: we use the small room by the *wudo* area

When I commented on the room being designed for prayers, the headteacher appeared defensive and stated "children don't always use the room because they're too busy playing outside" HTB. However, informal conversations with school members revealed that reasons for children not using the prayer room was due to lack of adult supervision "children aren't allowed to be in the room by themselves even in Ramadan, they would need an adult to be present at all times" (22B). This issue was also noticed during Ramadan as children were asked to leave the prayer room and the library as no adults was available to supervise (see section 6.2.2). It seems that there are, boundaries being set which prevent children from accessing facilities designed to foster their religious

needs. This is similar to how the original prayer room was closed and has been used as storage space. Focus groups have also highlighted that children do in fact use the prayer room, take for example F2B:

R: does anyone use the prayer room?

Ch2: yes I do

Ch1: lots of people go during Ramadan and other times.

Ch2: I go at lunchtime and sometimes Abdi comes with me

Ch1: I go to pray and Quran is there.

Moreover, observations and focus groups highlighted that children of other faiths rarely used the prayer room, consider (F4B):

R: have you ever been to the prayer room?

Ch3: Yeah, only one time to do an RE project, a lady, not from school came in and she camerered us [took photographs]. And it was about different religions.

Ch2: why don't you come and watch us?

Ch3: heheheh...I'm not a Muslim.

The above is an example of the mismatch between the school value and practice as Beale School had a photograph opportunity for the newspaper to display its multiculturalism. For the newspaper article the headteacher talked excessively about how the “prayer room is always used for group work and it brings different religions together” (O22B) and photographs were taken of children from various religions and cultures working collectively to demonstrate diversity and integration (D3B - newspaper article). This is another example of CRT's so called liberalism. This tenet attacks the ways in which educational institutions appear to foster objectivity and race neutrality (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) when in fact, it is untrue and breeds racism.

Although the RE policy in St. Liam's school explicitly stated that they “value seeing pupils performing contentedly their religious obligations” (D1L), in reality observations appeared to suggest that such statement was rhetoric. For instance, St. Liam's (a C of E school) has a prayer room but when asking the headteacher about it he commented “oh you've been to it? Well we used to refer to it as the 'quiet room' as it wasn't always used for praying, but since our last OfSTED inspection the vicar thought it would be a good idea to call it the 'prayer room'. I mean I still don't think it'll always be used as a prayer room but having

so many faiths in school, it would be ideal” (HTL). Also when asking the vicar (M5L) about the prayer room, this is what he had to say:

“If there is adult staff who needs to observe their prayers than that’s fine and if a child expressed their wish to pray, then I’m sure they can do that, but it’s not our place to encourage children to pray. But the idea of designating this room as a Muslim prayer room because of the large number of Muslim children here, I would feel it to be inappropriate.”

The prayer room is located in the middle of the outside garden at the side of the building, therefore, appears not to be connected to the school building. The room in contrast to the prayer room in Beale School is “very dirty and cold and has no signs to indicate that it’s a prayer room. It looks very creepy and unwelcoming” (O8L). It could almost be interpreted as the school is pushing the prayer room or elements of faith out of school or it is almost not connected to or part of the school. Such may suggest that the school is placing boundaries on the prayer room which with no doubt will make it appear inaccessible and hard for children to see. Data suggests that boundaries imposed on the prayer room such as its location and the lack of resources in it; pose the question of how the school interprets faith, where to place it or how much emphasis to put on it. Also from the headteacher’s interview it could be depicted as the school is almost distancing itself from or othering the faith aspect.

Moreover, a bilingual assistant (M2L) highlighted her disappointment with the way in which the school dealt with the prayer room:

“It’s not used as a prayer room; it’s used as a classroom. Look at that wall it’s got letters and sounds, it’s a classroom, not a prayer room. And a question occurred to my mind....why is it called a prayer room? But I have no answer. I’ve never seen any child using it for praying. I used to use this room because I didn’t want to miss the prayer, but not anymore. I wasn’t actually encouraged to come and pray in here because just in case they think something is wrong with me. I wasn’t encouraged even to ask can I go to the prayer room to pray because most of the time it’s used like a classroom.”

Additionally, from the 4 interviews with teachers; only 1 mentioned the prayer room, which may further suggest its lack of usage and importance. T2L highlighted:

T: We have a prayer room which is open to all faiths and if teachers, particularly when they are fasting want a quiet place to go to, then that's what's provided for them.

R: Does the prayer room get used often?

T: Not as much as it should or could do. It's used weekly for staff to come in and pray with Paul and Dave or other Church members. But perhaps that's something we can look towards, putting more into a focus.

Similarly, the prayer room seems to be inaccessible to children as they are unaware of its existence. All focus groups in St. Liam's School revealed that children were oblivious about the prayer room, take for example F1L:

Do you have a prayer room?

Ch3: No

Ch2: I'm going to talk about that in the school council to get a prayer room.

Ch3: that's a good idea, then I can do my prayers here.

Examples above suggest that, although St. Liam's headteacher stressed the importance of a having a prayer room to cater for various faiths, from the two years of observations there appeared to be no action put in place about this room. Gillborn (2005) suggests that disadvantaging ethnic minorities and upholding the privileges of a particular faith may influence their understanding, behaviour and interaction. The school prides itself on caring for all faiths and the school's prospectus (D3L) affirms "fostering religious values", yet in reality it appears that the school is preventing children from accessing facilities that already exists. This suggests that multiethnic children are being disadvantaged as they have not been given the right to exercise their religious commitments. If headteachers and teachers remain colour-blind where racism is not explicitly addressed, this implies that ethnic minority children will remain disadvantaged and inequalities will remain unchallenged. Using CRT's tenet of critiquing liberalism (Ladson-Billings, 2000) is essential as it demonstrates how both schools appear to allocate facilities for multiethnic children because it perhaps looks good for an inspection or in school prospectus, which defeats the key point and the benefits of having those prayer rooms in the first place. Claiming to implement a policy where all faiths are respected and catered for (rhetoric), then

appearing to create boundaries which disable children from accessing the facilities, negates such claims. In this context Gillborn (2006) views this as a form of exclusion on the bases of race which leads to children feeling and being othered. According to Wilkins (2001) maintaining faith differences, would prevail in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. Hence informing children about the existence of the prayer room, ensuring that it is fit for purpose and increasing supervision would develop and impact positively on children's understanding.

#### **6.4. Discipline and Respect**

As previously discussed, religious education is essential for children to be able to reflect on and learn from it, thereby, influencing their behaviour in a positive manner (see chapter 1). It has been argued that the influence of RE on children's behaviour is a relevant topic in multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious societies (Meijer, 1996) as the concept of behaviour traditionally has a religious connotation (Braspenning, 2010). However, data gathered from the two schools under study indicated that faith elements have lacking in lesson and assemblies which may have impacted on children's behaviour. There were copious examples of misbehaviour during the two years and lessons were regularly interrupted to deal with such behaviour. For example, in Beale School (O2B):

“The class were very noisy, very badly behaved. But the teacher didn't do anything which was quite shocking, she just sat in front of the class folded her arms and showed a cross face while the kids were screaming, shouting, throwing tantrums and almost beating themselves up on the carpet”.

Similarly in O17B “I was asked by the year 4 teacher to ‘go quickly and get the headteacher’ as a group of Somali boys were fighting in class.” Also in O15B “a group of children went to college for extra SATs support with the class teacher. The class began misbehaving, throwing pencils, colours and papers across the room. I was asked by the TA to step in and help her calm the children down”. This was very interesting as it further reflects my position within the research. Not only am I a Muslim researcher, but had to take on an additional position of a teacher as requested by the TA in an attempt to exhibit a figure of authority. This further explains why bilingual assistants see themselves of a low status and

teachers are better than them (see section 7.4.2). Nonetheless, similar patterns of behaviour were also noticed in St. Liam's (O12L) "5 Boys had a fight in class". And in O25L "Yemeni and Somali especially boys are always fighting even in class and shouting at other kids and teachers". When asking the vicar (M5L) about the link of faith and children's behaviour he affirmed "I think it helps give a positive ethos and a grounding bigger than the Church and teachers. Trying to please God, not just being good". However, this is an additional example of policy and values becoming empty rhetoric as observations in St. Liam's have shown religious celebrations utilised as opportunities for art and creativity with little reflection placed on how they may impact on behaviour. Acknowledgements and discussions of other faiths were very trivial, hence diminishing any opportunities of links made between religion and behaviour.

Additionally, in Beale School, a bilingual assistant affirmed that "having an Islamic ethos, you'd expect them [children] to behave well...but the school don't do much for the ethos now. In fact, they don't like to talk about having an Islamic ethos" (M4B). Also according to a learning mentor in Beale School "kids in this school just need self-confidence, they don't have the belief in themselves or the determination" (M1B). However, if children believe that they are not treated equally or feel othered through school's lack of recognition or acknowledgment of their faith and culture (as is evident in many of the focus groups in this chapter) then misbehaviour and a rebellious attitude will undoubtedly be evident in school. A bilingual assistant affirmed that "it would be nice if we could all just be aware of different faiths and understand what they're about rather than...they're right and they're wrong, which is what sometimes happens here. With children if they're taught about all religions then that's what they will grow up with. Teach them at a young age of respecting other people's faith and hopefully they'd grow up with that attitude" (M3B).

As I was raised in a Muslim country and taught excessively about Islamic values, I believe that RE plays a major role in children's behaviour and understanding. Faith teaching has helped in shaping my personality and how I should act towards others, irrespective of their beliefs or cultures (see section 1.2 and 1.5). Therefore, I felt very disappointed when I witnessed Muslim children behaving in non-Islamic manners. It is possible that due to missing connections or lack of emphasis between religion and education, in both schools, that children misbehaved. Therefore, is it due to such factors that



stereotypes always surface when people link an action/behaviour to a religion, thus escalating racism and fuelling Islamophobia (see section 3.7).

Through the use of the intersectionality perspective, CRT affirms that race is not the only form by which people are oppressed (Crenshaw, 1993). Therefore, children appear to be oppressed because of their behaviour which through careful observations, the school is partly to be blamed for. Faith schools have been praised for their presumably outstanding behaviour (Halstead and McLaughlin (2005), but Harris (2001a) argues that this is due to schools being dominated by teaching one religion. Therefore, there appears to be connections between teaching about religion and good behaviour as Smith (1998) suggests that religion can be linked to the development of inclusion, behaviour management, anti-bullying and peer support. However, in this research the schools seem not to adequately acknowledge various religions including Christianity, which might be an explanation to misbehaviour. Studies conducted to look at the effects of religion on young children, for example, Copley (1997) asserted that religious teaching has a significant positive effect on young children as it has been noticed that the best behaved children feel comfortable in a religious congregation. Similarly, Pierre (2001) suggested that children who have been involved in religious surroundings are more likely to have no emotional disturbances.

Although T2L noted “I think they go hand in hand [religion and behaviour], here, they do marry each other quite nicely”, observations suggested that due to lack of knowledge, slight frictions exist between children of different religions. For example during focus group F1L, children exchanged disrespectful phrases when discussing various religious celebrations

R: What do you think the word faith means?

Ch2: that you believe in something, like God.

Ch3: don't be stupid, I don't believe in God

Ch2: you believe in Santa

Ch3: no I don't!

Ch2: but you've got to believe in God, or you'll go to hell

Ch3: well I don't believe in hell

Ch2: that's not allowed.

It was realised amongst school members that children were better behaved when various faiths were discussed in assemblies and were more apparent in the school atmosphere for example (M4B) “I remember, there was one year group, years ago, some of the boys were really naughty. So we had a speaker from the Mosque who came and explained to the naughty boys and girls that this is not what Islam teaches, you have to act as role models and explain to them that you are Muslims, should behave good, they really took it on board and it worked”. In this respect, Adams (2009) and Ball (1987) pointed out that schools should not only impart knowledge and skills but also impart an image of ideal pupils in terms of behaviours.

Faith schools or schools with a religious ethos should examine different aspects of children religious backgrounds so as to challenge bullying, discrimination and various forms of exclusion (Crozier and Dimmock, 1999). I believe that this can create greater community cohesion in school (see section 3.5). CRT addresses the different barriers that affect pupils’ behaviour and attitude (Solorzano, 1997) and in this research data suggested that a combination of inadequate religious education and fostering religious commitment with teachers lacking knowledge of children’s faith/culture has played a large role in children’s behaviour. According to Pearce (2005) Muslim children are now perceived as challenging. Recent research has found that ethnic minority pupils are positioned in at least some UK schools, as inherently ‘different’ (Chadderton, 2009). This in turn, positions them as implicitly threatening, and outsiders. Teaching about other cultures and encouraging pupils to be aware of other religious activities would reduce tension thereby creating peaceful environment for teaching and learning. Promoting aspects of cultural diversity wherever possible (see sections 3.4 and 3.5) would create community cohesion thereby better understanding and positive integration of pupils within and outside schools. Minimising opportunities for pupils to practice their own religious activities and reducing direct cross-cultural contact would lessen inter-group relations and present a threat to social and community cohesion.

Cameron (2009) asserts that racist bullying is not just about the colour of skin, but it also concerns ethnic background and religion, and it is the only type of bullying that schools must record. Racist incidents were apparent in both schools for example calling children names: “you Arab” and “go back home”, jokes and stereotyping of different faiths “you worship animals”, “you kiss the

floor”. According to the CRT tenet about racism, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) and Gillborn (2008) reveal that ethnic minority students face a number of racial challenges in school. Field notes suggested a number of incidents where children were bullied due to race and faith, for example during a debate at lunch time about the *hijab* in Beale School (O17B):

“a Somali girl was bullied by a group of Muslim and non-Muslim children as she wears her scarf throughout the day but takes it off during PE. The Somali girl tried to justify her case but found it very challenging as children were wronging her actions and threatening her of going to hell fire when she dies. She became embarrassed and shrugged her shoulders every time they pointed fingers at her and shouted questions to her face”

Similarly another Muslim pupil was also bullied on many occasions for wearing the longest skirt in school. Although none of the teachers complained about her skirt, both Muslim and non-Muslim children ceased the chance to ridicule her maxi skirt. I observed them on various occasions trying to “tease her by asking her to do the splits and jump over the hoops” (O24B). Also during a PE class in St. Liam’s School a group of 3 girls were harassing a Muslim pupil for wearing a long sleeve top. They mocked and laughed at her for not wearing a t-shirt and “although she attempted to explain the religious reasons for her choice, they continued to make fun of her style” (O7L). The three girls failed to see that the Muslim girl’s choice of clothes was not due to a personal styling or fashion, but a religious one. Another example of racist incident was observed in St. Liam’s School (O19L):

“a child in year 6 was reading *Alfatiha* (a Quranic Chapter) to the whole class, but two other boys laughed out loudly. So the teacher instructed the two boys to leave the class. But did not say anything to the class about the incident and asked the boy to continue reading. At the end of the lesson, the teacher explained to me that it was rude and disrespectful”.

When I later discussed this incident with the child he remarked “those boys always laugh at us when we speak in Arabic....miss doesn’t do anything about it” (O19L). According to Richardson and Miles (2008) racism between pupils remains widespread in schools and is a regular fact of life for many pupils.

Targeted pupils may become scared, depressed and lacking in self-confidence and this can impact heavily on their progress at school (Teachernet, 2006). However, Lane (2008) argues that teachers may genuinely be unaware of racism amongst their pupils: children as young as four can be aware that they should not express racist attitudes in front of adults and this awareness increases as they become older. Richardson (2005) argued that racism can lead to children from ethnic minority backgrounds feeling insignificant and excluded. It also seems that with the above examples children felt othered through other children's comments, negative reactions and lack of concern from teachers. Observing such incidents I was immediately able to relate to them as it was reminiscent to the oppression I experienced. I was the girl who was endlessly mocked for wearing a *hijab* and it was regularly pulled off my head. I was also the girl with the longest skirt in secondary school, and until this day remember students' looks and comments. I was also the girl with the odd PE uniform which was a target of many obscenities. Hence the view of CRTs (e.g. Solorzano, 1997; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) has highlighted the term othered which is related to marginalised groups that often go unrecognised and unacknowledged in faith schools. However, being othered was a result of the school (Yosso, 2006) as it perhaps failing to put in place a system or policies which makes room for, acknowledges and respects difference.

Furthermore, some TAs and dinner ladies hesitated to take action to tackle racist incidents and some failed to report it. A dinner lady said "oh, it wasn't a serious comment" (O12L) and a TA (M5B) commented "well kids usually say that to each other, but it's a joke really". It can be argued that such incident should be taken into consideration and teachers need to challenge such behaviour, otherwise it might become a habit and viewed as normal. Unfortunately, this is what happened to me in both primary and secondary school as bullying was not challenged, therefore, continued for many years (see sections 1.3 and 1.4). Although the vast majority of teachers in this research claimed that they were confident in reporting racist incidents, a bilingual assistant (M2L) argued that "there are some racist behaviour, but some teachers lack cultural understanding and reasons for reporting the incidents so it stops them doing it". Therefore it seems that the real issue is not about having confidence but the cultural and religious knowledge to engage in and know what counts as racist incidents (Richardson, 2005). Pearce (2005) asserted that if teachers cannot see a problem with the use of racist terms they will not be

challenging their use amongst pupils, and if teachers do not have the knowledge and understanding to talk about issues of race and ethnicity they will be unable to educate children in school.

The headteacher of Beale School stated that “we’re a multicultural school and we value diversity as you can see, our records have minimal accounts of racist incidents” (HTB). Such is an example of policy and values becoming empty rhetoric. Observations suggested that some racist incidents were overlooked and when incidents were identified as racist, children were usually sent to the headteacher who would discuss the issue but not record it. It seems that schools are often worried about submitting large numbers of reports they will be seen as having a problem with racism (Miles, 2009). However, the fact that some behaviour was not reported may suggest that the school is subconscious of its image. Moreover Shah (2009:3) pointed out “many schools are either not fully aware or not doing enough to combat racist attitudes amongst pupils to tackle racism and promote race relations, for either lack of resources or other pressures”. During observation it has been realised that teachers were constantly under pressure to ensure teaching and marking is complete, therefore, appeared to overlook the issues of misbehaviour. However, one would expect teachers and schools’ members to implement their policies to ensure they are dealing with racist incidents in the most appropriate way, rather than being stressed with paperwork which can sometimes mean that the most serious cases of racism are not dealt with. Similarly, observations and focus groups have suggested that some children are scared to report racist bullying. When asking children why they do not report racist behaviour some claimed that they worried about looking vulnerable in front of their friends, (F3L):

Ch2: noo Miss! I can’t, children will laugh at me

Ch1: heheheh he’s a scardy cat!

Ullmann (2009) highlighted that due to external pressures on teachers, their ability to spend time educating young people against racism and finding out about the pupils’ views and understanding is restricted. As a result, when racist behaviours are not challenged, children are likely to repeat their actions in increasingly damaging ways (DfES, 2004). If racist behaviours are not tackled by schools and the underlying issues were not explored then it is unlikely to lead to a positive change in behaviour (Richardson and Miles, 2008).

## 6.5. School Ethos

Observations and interviews suggest that practices and activities of teachers and members in Beale School often departed from the school ethos. For example when conversing with the year 4 teacher (O16B) about the school's ethos she said "well it doesn't really show that often, I mean okay it has an Eid party and a prayer room but the ethos doesn't play a big role. At the end of the day it's not the faith of the school, it's only an ethos". Similarly a learning mentor highlighted that "an Islamic ethos is not strong unless the school is driven by a Muslim faith then it would be more obvious. Any other school could do an Eid party and *halal* food regardless of its denomination or ethos, so it's not that special" (M1B). Also when I asked the year 6 teacher (T2B) if the Islamic ethos is apparent in school he clarified "apart from the *halal* food and prayer room, no! Not really, you just get on with the curriculum and no religious tasks get put in or mentioned because there is no room for it". The genuine vibe about the Islamic ethos in Beale School is that it is insignificant and does not impact on school's culture (see section 3.6). In fact according to the RE co-ordinator the Islamic ethos' representation in school depends on teachers "a lot of the time it's down to teachers to make lessons more relevant, but it just means they must have the background information" (T2B). In this context, since the school has left its ethos implementation to the staff and as evident above, teachers view the ethos as inappropriate and irrelevant, then it is no surprise that it is not praised or mentioned in school or emphasised in assemblies, lessons or activities. According to Mirza (2010) the school ethos, should not only be evident in the school as a whole but also in both children and teachers, which accommodates shared values and responsibility, a respect and understanding of difference and the development of critical thinking.

Practices implemented by the school were not only in some cases far removed from the ethos but appeared to be undermined and distorted by the actions and attitudes of school members. Headteacher and teachers continuously denied that the school has an Islamic ethos and only referred to it as a "multicultural ethos" although it was still an Islamic ethos in the school prospectus (D4B), and as a result, the school sees no need to discuss or implement it. Even during a staff meeting when a bilingual assistant "suggested that various activities could be planned around the school to raise awareness about Ramadan, her views

were not taken into consideration and the headteacher was quick to affirm that this is not a Muslim school” (O9B). According to the RE co-ordinator (T2B):

“Previously the school was said to have had an Islamic ethos I think in recent times for whatever reason, I think the school has distanced itself from saying that it has an Islamic ethos to being a community school which caters for the community. We’re looking to review our ethos and take it from there”.

When I asked about the reasons for changing the ethos she explained:

“The school thought in its current environment with its current teaching staff that it wouldn’t have been plausible to have an Islamic ethos and then not really cater for it. What does an Islamic ethos mean, it was never spelt out, does it mean the teacher would have to do above and beyond the curriculum to cater for the Islamic ethos?” (T2B).

Although the above evidence suggests that the teacher did not like the Islamic ethos and viewed it as an extra burden on teaching, it could perhaps indicate some genuine confusion within the school and amongst staff about what the ethos is in general. This could explain why the school has abandoned using the term Islamic ethos and refer to it a multicultural ethos although it has not officially been altered. As a result, the school feels no obligations to do activities related to the Islamic religion as it is no longer affiliated with the Islamic ethos. Interviews and observations suggest that there is a sense of the ethos being othered (Dixson and Rousseau, 2006). As Ladson-Billings (1998) discusses racism through CRT, it could be argued that racism in this case is also apparent as lack of acknowledgments for different culture and religious festivals are also visible for the claimed multicultural ethos.

Although Beale School is not a faith school, it has been established with a religious ethos. However, observations suggested that RE lessons do not always take place. For instance when asking children about topics in RE lessons they mentioned (F1B):

Ch2: we never did R.E this year, only in year 2 and year 4.

Ch1: we did a Bible story about Moses in year 2.

Ch3: in year 4, we learnt about when Jesus was born

Also in (F4B):

R: What have you done in RE?

Ch1: stuff from the Bible...Miss reads us a story.

Ch2: about Christmas

Ch2: in class 4, miss told us the story of Jesus.

Additionally, T3B stated that "I would love to teach in a faith school so I can share my faith, the passion and beliefs with children. I wish that other faiths are involved in all our teaching and is practical in children's life more than it is in this school". This therefore, suggests that elements of faith are absent from lessons. However, Breen and Donaldson (1995) highlighted that schools' ethos and values can be based on shared human values rather than one religion. Moreover, the ethos in St. Liam's School's is of a Christian nature (D3L), however, the data suggested that there are differences between its ethos and reality. The school claims (D3L) that it focuses on Christian foundations and values but data revealed that the ethos needs to be more robust. For example according to the year 5 teacher (T4L) "the ethos is more focused on learning than any religion. I think it's because we are lost as a school because we're C of E School but we have children of many faiths." Also during an interview with the year 4 teacher (T1L), she became very passionate about the topic:

M: I think for faith to appear in the ethos, you have to be very clear about which faith you are aligned to. So this is a Church of England school, it's a Christian school I feel that it should come through, it does to an extent but it's very different to the faith that appears in my other school because I teach in two schools. It's very, very different to what appears in my other school, which is a Christian school serving 99% Christian community. Here we're a multi-faith community so the Christian faith appears in a diluted way in the school ethos.

R: so is the school ethos portrayed in classes?

M: I don't think so. No. No. I think this school is more like a county primary school. You can't see the faith element. There is nothing wrong with wanting people to know that you stand by something. I always feel here that we try to be all things to all men. And that doesn't work, it doesn't work. Because there's always been this element of we don't want to offend Muslims and I have always said but Muslims have strong faith and will not be offended because they will respect your faith in the same way that they want you to respect theirs. You're still travelling along that same path where discipline is important. But as a teacher I want evidence of it in the faith school, not just the name.



The above extract highlights the lack of school's approach to acknowledging its own due to the make-up of the school being predominantly Muslims. However, at the same time, the school is perhaps not acknowledging other faiths and cultures due to its religious denomination and its connection with the Church and the vicar. As a result, it could be argued that in both cases the school is facing a dilemma and is worried about offending one group when teaching about a certain religion, therefore, it has taken a diluted approach of not acknowledging any. Despite the fact that the school's cohort is predominantly of one faith, Short (2002) notes that this should not be divisive, but instead argues that, if appropriately utilised, they are a force for unity. Additionally, CRT discusses hidden powers between whites and ethnic minorities (Gillborn, 2006) and the above demonstrate that children have power as they sometimes know more than the school but it has been suppressed.

Although the ethos in St. Liam's is "not very powerful due to the makeup of the school" as commented by the headteacher (HTL), data suggested that school activities have constrained children to act in particular ways. For example when only Christian festivals are acknowledged and celebrated, children began to believe that such festivals are more important than theirs or others (see section 6.2). Focus groups have also highlighted some concerns with RE lessons (F2L):

Ch2: We haven't done any RE. Really, not in year 5

Ch3: I think maybe cos this year is all about science

Ch1: yeah we only did about Jesus and Christmas

Ch2: cos we did the nativity

Ch1: and we need to know about the three wise men

Also F1L:

Ch1: I don't think we did RE. In this year yet, in year 5.

Ch2: because like, did you do Art in Year 4? (Asking the other 2children)

Ch1: no we didn't do Art in year 4.

Ch2: so maybe in year 4 they do different subjects, then in year 5, they do the ones we haven't done.

R: So you don't think you've done any R.E. this year?

All: No.

According to the vicar (M5L) "pupils know what their personal religious conviction is, they know it is not identical with the ethos of the school". However,

above sub-themes suggested that the school has lacked in providing sufficient meanings of the Christian religion as well as acknowledging other faiths. There are other religions that children should understand and respect as well as having their faith acknowledged and discussed. Therefore, it appears that children have been othered through school ethos and practices which do not take into consideration other faiths. Similarly, headteacher and teachers regularly talk about how “we’re a multi-faith school” (T4L), however, field notes revealed that bilingual assistants are treated differently. “One of the dinner ladies (Somali nationality) and a parent to two children in school (she also helps in class) walked into the staff room but nobody greeted her or acknowledged her. Few teachers and TAs glanced at her but no one spoke to her. She sat on the table, had her tea and biscuits then left the room” (O20L). Similarly an informal conversation with a Pakistani dinner lady mentioned that “teachers aren’t friendly” and she was very worried about other teachers hearing her opinion (O27L). Also a bilingual assistant (M2L) commented “I don’t actually mix that much with them [staff]. I just do my job, check my mail, I don’t even like going to the staff room because it’s like they don’t care”. Such practice and above examples of racist behaviour towards both multiethnic children and school members suggest that the school views its denomination superior to other faiths as explained by Gillborn (2005), therefore, othering children and bilingual members on the grounds of race and religion.

A review of the data suggests that the ethos in both school which is likely to test the tolerance levels of individuals, has in fact rarely been visible, therefore, emphasising the mismatch between policy and practice. According to Munn (2008), schools need to encourage an understanding of meaning and significance of faith, including respect for other faiths, through offering equal religious opportunities to all its pupils. Differences should not only be tolerated but celebrated. All children and school members are to be valued and respected as they are important to the whole community. Interviewing teachers revealed that aspects of school life contribute to the ethos which maintains the standards of behaviour, however, regular misbehaviours have been frequently observed in both schools. This includes rough play, physical and verbal bullying and bad language. Therefore, schools ought to promote racial equality through developing positive attitudes and an inclusive ethos (Brogan, 2009) and through the use of teaching materials that reflect the cultural, religion and ethnic diversity of the classroom. Hence Grace (1995) argues that the school ethos should

embody the values advocated by the school's communities and provides the atmosphere for life in and beyond the school itself.

## **6.6. Concluding Remarks**

Learning to look critically at race relations is a key part of CRT. Examining everyday interactions, and finding the racial components in them, can help to see the true extent of racism. Through critical analysis, it is hoped people can recognise the extent of racism and work towards racial equality. Drawing on interviews and children focus groups from a two-year ethnographic research conducted in two primary schools, as well as documentation and field notes obtained during observations, it has been revealed that there is a mismatch between school policy and values and practice. Evidence suggested a lack of religious awareness in both schools, hence appearing to disadvantage children of the values and merits of faith. Lack of knowledge of cultural diversity and delivering religious activities without highlighting their values has created confusion amongst children. Evidence also indicated that many teachers and schools' members did not fully provide a rich and diverse religious knowledge where all faiths and cultures are equally valued. This seems to be the result of policy and values becoming empty rhetoric. Accordingly, teachers and other members need to integrate the faith in lessons and activities, where religious understanding is implanted not only by word but also by every facet of a schools' culture.

Furthermore, data analysis suggested that elements of faith were apparent in the school ethos; however, it did not permeate through school culture, practices and classroom activities. Where facilities have been provided to foster religious comments, there seems to be boundaries limiting children's access to practise their religious needs. To encourage a respect for religion and strengthen understanding of various cultural aspects children need to be taught about the main religions in the world including, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism – together with their religious festivals and customs. Consequently, one of the most basic criteria by which schools must be appraised is fostering religious commitment as well as developing faith awareness among its administrators and teachers for it is those who largely shape the religious ethos of the schools.

In addition, the findings of this research highlighted that racism is still an issue in both schools, both directly and indirectly. Through CRT the data revealed that ethnic minority children were more likely to be subject to racist behaviours. Racist practices were present in both schools whereby having unhealthy impacts on children's behaviour in general and children from ethnic minority backgrounds in particular.

## Chapter 7

### Staff and children: Integration into the School

#### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter provides rich description and discussion of the second major theme which is - Staff and children: integration into the school – and its sub-themes are:

1. Recognition of cultural diversity
  - a. Dress code
  - b. Etiquettes in cultures
  - c. Being inconsiderate
2. School religious visits
  - a. Places of worship
  - b. Hindered opportunities
3. Forms of dominance
  - a. Dominance in Lessons
  - b. Staff Dominance

The idea of defining integration is very complex. In order for people to become integrated, Saeed (2007) notes that they must know and understand each other. Integration is about children from diverse backgrounds being educated together every day in the same classrooms and are treated with fairness and respect (Reed, 2005). Similarly, Modood (2014:146) suggested that “a core of integration is equality of opportunity in an unsegmented society”, and so not facing discriminated due to race or ethnicity. Therefore, it could be argued that integration does not require the parties to give up their own characters, nor to focus on their differences. In this research, integration refers to the way staff and children in a school feel they are part of the culture and school community, irrespective of their religion and beliefs. Riots in 2001 were viewed as lack of integration caused by faith schools and that ethnic segregation throughout English schools has become entrenched (Harris, 2001b; Burgess *et al.*, 2004) (see section 3.4). Additionally, the deputy prime minister Nick Clegg, who sends his son to a Roman Catholic comprehensive, warns in the Daily Telegraph that faith schools must create a balanced intake to prevent themselves becoming segregated from society (Paton, 2014). According to Clegg, schools with a

religious ethos act as 'engines of integration' thereby, actively teaching about all faiths. Whether a faith or a community school, Modood (2007) affirms that ethnic minority children should feel integrated within the school and empowered as individuals.

This research has argued that CRT can be used to explore issues surrounding faiths, race and culture. The names of CRT's authors used in this chapter for analytical tools are: Bell, Crenshaw, Delgado, Gillborn, Harris, Ladson-Billings, Ryan, Solorzano, Stefancic, Tate, Yosso and Youdell. Also the names of feminist authors used in are: Collins, Allen, Thompson and Yamani. The remainder of references are from various literature and literature review chapters. Tenets exploring racism, intersectionality and dominance have also been utilised to support this analysis. With regards to eliminating racism, it is not expected of schools to carry the burden alone, as it pervades the social and political structures outside the control of schools. However, according to the Runnymede Trust (2000) school children need to experience practices that can equip them with understanding and skills to help them resist any sort of racism. This is justified as the Runnymede Trust believes that schools are places which could influence young people's understanding of issues around racism and tackle moral bias amongst them. Unfortunately, research suggests that rather than challenging racism many educational establishments are actually reproducing it through a range of institutional and individual practices (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000).

## **7.2. Recognising Cultural Diversity**

As explained in chapter one section 1.8, the term culture encompasses aspects pertaining to religious codes, traditions, customs, habits, cuisine, arts and others. The findings of this research suggest that both schools faced particular challenges in ensuring that children experience festivals and events of different faiths and learn about different cultures. In this sub-theme an in-depth discussion of problems including racism associated with cultural diversity is outlined. This includes how racism in terms of acknowledging and talking about different cultures created potential sources of oppression and disadvantages which impacted on children's behaviours and knowledge.

### 7.2.1. Dress Code

Observations of both schools revealed strong evidence of ethnic minority children facing discrimination, inequality and encountering barriers which were frequently racially biased and deprive them of their rights. For example field notes in Beale School (O9B) pointed out that pupils in year 6 had an opportunity to attend swimming sessions for 2 weeks. Although the swimming sessions was not compulsory and the school sent out letters for parents to consent to their children (D5B), three teachers appeared surprised when one parent elected not to give consent for his daughter to go swimming. Also on the same day as the swimming session the year 5 and 6 TAs appeared to “mock the fact that the Somali girl took the day off because of the swimming class and they believed that it was religiously orientated. She explained to me ‘it’s not like kids are naked in the swimming pool, they all have clothes on and it’s up to them what they want to wear. It’s a shame that she should miss out over something so silly’” (O9B). The school was aware that swimming lessons might be a culturally sensitive issue to some families therefore, asked for consent forms, however TAs reaction to the issue may imply lack of knowledge and awareness of other cultures. They also seemed to be disrespectful of the family’s choice for an optional event and appeared to ridicule their culture traditions. It is also significant to point out that this is the same pupil who was continuously bullied by other children for being the “strictest Muslim in school” as she wore the longest skirt and baggiest PE uniform (see section 6.4). Using a CRT framework to analyse such incidents has not only helped to expose racism towards other cultures and traditions (Gillborn, 2005) it also revealed the lack of cultural sensitivity apparent in school. Through the tenet of an intersectionality perspective (see section 4.2.3.3), CRT stresses the role of culture in the oppression of people, and the above is an example of such oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Due to culture differences, the action of the Muslim child was misunderstood and her parents’ wishes appeared to be mocked.

Although both schools have a uniform policy (D4L and D6B) which prevents children wearing certain items for health and safety reasons, it has been observed that there might have been some discrimination against children specifically girls because of religious dress. Field notes revealed that a number of children from different faiths felt that they are not encouraged and supported to practice their own religious activities. These included teachers’ unawareness

and tolerance of the dress code. For example in St. Liam's School, the dress code policy does not take into account the uniform for Muslim girls during PE lessons. Although Muslims girls wear the *hijab* during the school day, it was observed that they were often reproached by teacher during PE lessons (O13L) "Although she [Muslim girl] didn't seem to have any issues with the PE lesson or certainly where she was running, the teacher stopped her and told her to 'pull the scarf back or if you wanted to take it off'. The girl confirmed that she was fine and continued dribbling the ball". When asking the teacher about why she spoke to the pupil she replied 'sometimes parents force children to wear the scarf and they get scared to take it off". An informal conversation with the pupil after the PE lesson confirmed that she has been wearing the scarf from an early age and was comfortable with it (O13L); "I'm used to it and all my friends wear it [*hijab*] but no one asks them to take it off. I asked Aysha in year 6, miss never asks her to take it off, but I don't like it when miss asks me to take it off, I have to wear it all time". Such observation resonates with me as I remember challenges I faced for wearing the *hijab* and more so for wearing a different uniform for PE which was acceptable in Islam (see section 1.4).

Similarly during a PE lesson in Beale School (O17B) the teacher appeared to single out a Muslim girl and criticised her for wearing a long sleeve top "the girl attempted to explain that she should wear a long sleeved top to cover her arms because she is a Muslim, but the teacher continued to insist that she should wear a t-shirt like the other girls and pointed to the rest of the class. She asked her to wear a t-shirt for next week's lesson". When I asked the teacher about the dress code in an interview she affirmed (T3B) "the school policy states that children should wear a white t-shirt for PE. It's not me...I didn't write the policy, so it must be implemented". Such actions and attitudes could be seen as a form of racism on many levels firstly as the uniform policy (D4B) failed to make exemptions and did not take into consideration other cultural issues, and also from the teachers who perhaps lacked cultural knowledge, insensitivity to deal with the issue and refused to use her own discretion in this occasion and allow it unless it imposed health and safety risks. However, this could be seen as yet another example of the teacher's attempt to exert power over ethnic minority children and making them feel inferior.

Through CRT, above examples suggest that children have perhaps been othered on the basis of faith/culture. It is hardly encouraging for children to feel



valued and integrated within the school community when they have been deprived from practicing their cultural customs. The fact that the teacher spoke publicly to Muslim pupil from the above example, and reproached her in front of all children is somewhat insensitive and inappropriate. This could create misunderstanding, fear and conflict amongst children (Ladson-Billings, 2000) and will undoubtedly hinder ethnic-minorities feeling integrated into the school culture. Additionally, when other pupils see how multiethnic children are being othered by teachers they may possibly imitate such behaviour and harass/bully other pupils on the same grounds as I have seen done previously (see chapter 6 section 6.4). Such practice, according to Miles and Brown (2003) significantly interacts with racism. Findings of the Runnymede Report (1997) into Islamophobia identified contrasting views on Islam and raised an awareness of the growing reality of anti-Islamic hostility in Britain (see section 3.7). This according to Benn and Jawad (2004) undermined the ability of individuals to speak out about their concerns. CRT argues in its tenets about racism becoming an endemic which unfortunately goes unchallenged and then is not seen as a problem. Therefore, cultural needs of multiethnic children must be addressed in a supportive capacity, which does not undermine or isolate them (Shah, 2009) as a means of working towards integration. Gillborn (2008) affirmed that for ethnic minority children to exercise their normative rights, schools should reshape their policies and approaches to match and meet the different needs and cultures of children. CRT maintains that schools should recognise culture as an important component when educating children from diverse background (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001).

Feminist theory is also essential for the above examples, as girls appeared content with and willing to follow the Islamic dress code and covering their bodies, however, school staff seemed to regard this as a form of female oppression, similar to traditional feminists who would also view it as a violation of women's liberty (Yamani, 2011). Perceiving Muslim women in this way, as highlighted by Tohidi (1998), is against feminist ideology which operates on equal values and principles. According to Mirza (1998) there are many misconceptions which depict Muslim women as oppressed and being forced by family members and above example could allude to some misconceptions staff have about Muslim girls.

It could be assumed that insignificant commitment to the promotion of cultural diversity in schools could be due to a lack of teacher training on different cultures and ethnicities. There would be no appreciation of RE, faith and cultures if it was not taught and emphasised on a teacher training course, therefore, it is important to be taught to children from an early age so they can learn to appreciate, tolerate and respect difference. Moreover, lack of cultural diversity promotion may also be due to schools lack of enthusiasm for and an appreciation of the diverse cultures which goes beyond teaching. Interviews with teachers and other school members revealed that staff had no training related to cultural diversity and some viewed it as insignificant, for instance T3B “our training is mostly focused on teaching strategies and assessments which is very important to boost children’s grades, but not really on culture and faith, because this isn’t a faith school”. Also T4L “apart from the information I got in my degree, no. There aren’t many courses on cultures or races, its mostly on EAL or SEN”. There is perhaps not enough (if any) training on diversity, ethnicity, racism and culture for teachers in the education system and with such limited awareness of such issues it is worrying how ethnic minority pupils are actually understood by their teachers. The assumption that teachers will already know these issues as stated by Mirza (2010) is inadequate and illustrates a huge weakness in the education system in providing knowledge, training and awareness of multicultural society. This presents an extremely depressing picture where teachers are not trained on aspects of diversity, different cultures, religions and race equality in schools with a particular high number of Muslim children.

### **7.2.2. Etiquettes in Cultures**

Moreover, it seems that some teachers do not have the cultural knowledge and skills to respond effectively to the needs of children of different faiths. Perhaps more appropriately, there is an indication that they may not feel properly equipped with knowledge to educate about cultural aspects to children and respond to their questions (Cohen and Manion, 1983), thereby depriving them of relevant role models. During a lesson break in St. Liam’s School (O25L), an incident was observed whereby “a Chinese girl was asked to pour juice for children on her table, but when one of the children finished his cup, she refilled without asking if he wanted any more. The child became very upset and started shouting at her. The teacher got involved and reproached the Chinese girl for pouring more juice without asking”. When I later asked the girl about this

incident, I realised that part of the Chinese culture is to always refill other's cups without being asked (Davis, 2005). It was awkward to see the teacher's lack of cultural awareness and her indifference to find out the reasons behind the girl's actions. Similarly, in Beale School (O3B) "when a Chinese boy sneezed, the teacher responded with 'Bless you', however, when the boy did not reply with 'thank you', she frowned and had an expression of disapproval. The boy shrugged his shoulders and appeared uncomfortable". During later research on the internet, I became aware that Chinese people do not recognise the terms "Bless you" or "God Bless you" when you sneeze (Bailey, 2001; Davis, 2005). In China, when someone sneezes, people simply ignore it, therefore, reflecting back to the incident revealed teacher's unawareness of cultural diversity, which led to the child's confusion. In this respect Cush (2005) argued that containing well-adjusted pupils from many different backgrounds and taking into consideration their belief and cultural systems would create an environment of understanding and appreciation through which everyone would feel respected and integrated into the school community.

Another example of what appeared to be lack of recognition of cultural diversity in St. Liam's was when a new Hindu boy ate some of his school dinner with his fingers. Although he had a knife and fork, he chose to eat the rice with his hand. Children next to him on the table all laughed and teased him saying "Eeeee that's dirty!" (O5L). According to the Hindu culture, (Patra, 2012; Zimmermann, 2013) much of the food is eaten with fingers. Children's responses may reflect weakness in nurturing aspects of Indian customs within school culture, which arguably lead to a child being bullied and segregated. Above practices, as emphasised by Mirza (2010:23) may hinder children's capacity to "understand and appreciate others from different backgrounds with a sense of shared values, fulfilling their potential and feeling part of a community". According to Almond, (2010:136) multiethnic children, like everyone else, "have a right to be themselves without being bullied by others". In order to combat such issues, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive policy which focuses on the entire school culture (Davies, 2008) as well as providing children with information about the diversity of cultures.

### 7.2.3. Being Inconsiderate

Findings of this research uncover the concept of tolerance of other faiths, seemed not to be accurately and fairly implemented (see chapter 6). This research has observed the way in which cultures for ethnic minorities seem to be inadequately and insufficiently portrayed. Minority cultures are sometimes presented as detached in many school practices. During preparations for the Eid party in Beale School, which was the only recognition for the Islamic festivals, a TA and a learning mentor appeared extremely rude and thoughtless towards the story of Eid (O26B) “She [TA] was disrespecting the story, ‘no way...he’s tying his child up, he’s crazy’ ‘he’s insane...he’s going to kill him’ and disapproved of Muslims celebrating such a story and incident”. Also in the next day (O27B) I “overheard the mentor in staff room asking the headteacher about a title for the play, she suggested ‘The unwise man!’. When the head noticed me she said ‘oh wait...you want to be culturally sensitive because you can’t call a prophet an unwise man’. She asked her to be careful when choosing a title and check it with Mrs Ali.” Both TA and learning mentor lacked cultural sensitivity and understanding and their commentary of the story and behaviour could be regarded as insulting and somewhat racist. During the two years of ethnography, this Eid party was the only effort attempted by the school to foster religious commitment and acknowledge ethnic minority children (see section 6.2.2). However, possible elements of intolerance and discrimination were entrenched in the celebration. This poses the question as to how we could expect children to tolerate other faiths and respect differences amongst cultural traditions if their role models appear prejudiced and narrow-minded about other religions. Therefore, children cannot be blamed if they echo the teacher’s behaviour. An example of such behaviour is when a child stated in a focus group (F3L) “oh I don’t want to sit next to no Somali...I have other friends”. It is possible that some children distance themselves from interacting with children from diverse cultural backgrounds which confirms the persistence of embedded cultural divisions. Furthermore, it is very peculiar that teachers and support staff in school are still unsure about the Eid story considering what I have been told in interviews about the school always celebrating Eid and informs children about the various cultural customs. The lack of knowledge apparent from teachers and TAs perhaps reveals the contradictions and seem to be a sign of weakness from the school for catering and valuing other cultures.

Beale School appeared to have missed a beneficial opportunity for recognising cultural diversity during a year 6 ICT lesson. The teacher asked children to design Christmas cards, however, when children asked about doing Eid cards as it was close to the time of the festival, he refused and said "it's not an RE lesson! You can do the Eid cards at another time" (O11B). Although the majority of class rebelled and some children were threatening to do Eid cards, the teacher was very adamant about his lesson. Through his instructions, the teacher seemed to have signified one religion and othered another. Christmas was given precedence over other festivals although both were occurring at the same time and the teacher failed to recognise a great opportunity of cultural diversity. Children did not need to ask to do Eid cards, it should have been initiated by the teacher and if not, then the teacher should have had a balanced approach, respected cultural diversity and asked children to do both types of cards to gain maximum benefits. However, when the teacher realised that children were looking at me for approval and many were asking for my permission to do the cards, he allowed them to do Eid card. Perhaps due to my presence in class and children's persistence, the teacher modified his lesson plans although much persuasion was required for something straightforward and valuable. There appears to be a connection between the above example and CRT's tenet of dominance, as Bell (1995) argues that issues relevant to ethnic minority children were perhaps overlooked as they did not converge with the school's interest. Therefore, the teacher perhaps did not support the idea of children designing Eid cards as it did not relate or improve the school's Christmas celebration (Bell, 2004). According to Lane (2008) there is a need for schools to create an environment of openness by allowing pupils to express their views and reflect on issues of cultural diversity. This can help children to become open-minded and comfortable with different cultural backgrounds.

Similarly an occasion when St. Liam's School appeared to lack cultural awareness was when presenting the winner of a bullying poster with a voucher. "In assembly, the headteacher announced the winner of the bullying competition and it was a [Muslim] Malaysian girl from year 6. They presented her with a gift voucher inside a Christmas card" (O11B). The pupil looked surprised when she later showed me the card as she pointed out the large Christmas tree with crucifixes around the border. Perhaps she was offended by what appeared to be a thoughtless choice of card which celebrated and promoted one faith without taking into consideration the specific child. Although the Malaysian girl was

ecstatic about winning the competition she was clearly upset and confused about the card “but why [this card]? I’m a Muslim, I don’t celebrate Christmas...” (O11B). CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2005) indicated that racism does not necessarily operate in crude explicit forms but operates in a socio-political context where it is becoming more embedded and increasingly nuanced. Racism can be evidenced in the outcome of processes and relations irrespective of intent as reflected in the above example where a pupil, although winning the competition, was made to feel very uncomfortable with the school’s thoughtless and racist choice of card.

Moreover, it was observed that St. Liam’s School seemed to have overlooked celebrating one aspect of British culture. They arranged parents’ evening on the same day as Bonfire Night from 4 o’clock onwards (D5L). Although Bonfire Night connects more with a cultural tradition in the UK than a religious belief, the school should have perhaps respected such a tradition and rearranged parents’ evening. However, the headteacher did not try to compromise or change the date, which could perhaps be signs of weak links between the school and its parents. As a consequence of the clash of events, many children were angry and frustrated as they were forced by parents to attend parents evening and missed such a unique cultural event of the fireworks display. Teachers, on the other hand, appeared extremely excited as they stated (O5L) “Oh we won’t have lots of parents so we can go home early”. Some of the parents who did not attend parents’ evening had no choice but to contact the school to set another date, but unfortunately many of the other parents did not. According to Cush (2005) schools need to provide the chance for pupils to learn about co-existence otherwise there might be tension amongst children. This step could be initiated by schools at least acknowledging the British culture.

Shah (2009) stated that schools are said to pass the cultural heritage of the society in which they exist to the next generations. However, observations and interviews affirmed that St. Liam’s needs to work on acknowledging and representing the culture of its pupils as a means of resolving tension between children and clashing culture as well as building integration. Consider for example (O10L) “The vicar said ‘we’re going to have a prayer whether you’re a Christian or not because we all believe in God and we want his blessing.’ Then when he started his prayer he said ‘Jesus son of God...’ and ended with ‘Father hear our prayers...Amen’”. The prayer was supposed to be generalised so

irrespective of religion children could join and parents watching the nativity could participate. However, plenty of parents appeared unhappy and disapproved at the end of the Christmas play. A teacher who noticed parents' reaction admitted that the prayer was not suitable (O10L) "there was no need for prayer at the end, especially, when he said it like that, I'm sure Muslims wouldn't have liked it. But you see he's not been into school for a long time". Perhaps due to his absence in school assemblies and activities, the vicar attempted to assert his presence and the school's religious denomination. Similarly with regards to CRT's dominance, Bell (1995) emphasised that ethnic-minority's necessities are disregarded, unless it converges with the interests of white people. Thus the vicar perhaps showed examples of dominance where needs and inclusion of ethnic minority children and their parents were perhaps disregarded as they served no interest to the vicar or the Christmas festival. The fact that the school is culturally diverse should have been acknowledged and the audience respected via carefully considering the wording of the prayer so as not to offend and disrespect others. Shah (2009:16) argued that teachers might "deprive the future society of its huge potential if they fail to fulfil their responsibilities to ensure inclusion and engagement of Muslim pupils or any other group."

Similarly, St. Liam's have a large emphasis on hymn practices; however, they always focus on the Christian religion with songs relating to its various festivals (O5L). Children are always expected to attend those assemblies and take part in singing hymns, which is exactly what I experienced in secondary school (see section 1.4), however, the school did not provide opportunities for children to sing songs about other faiths or from other cultures, therefore, this could make children feel less important and othered. For example focus group F4L:

Ch1: we've done hymn practices

Ch3: every week miss

Ch1: but I don't like to sing cos it all about Jesus and Christmas!

Ch2: I don't sing either.

Ch1: yes you do, I saw you

Ch2: but miss says we have to sing

Ch1: I think they should let us read from the Quran. I'm really good at reading it, mum teaches me at home

Ch2: yeah that's boss...I could read it too.

Ch1: loads of the kids will join.

Schools are thought to be a crucial media for interaction and the prevention of disintegration and according to Mirza (2010) schools are generally regarded as vital in the promotion of multiculturalism and in advancing community cohesion (see sections 3.4 and 3.5). However, field notes and above examples appear to indicate that the school's faith, being a Church of England, takes more precedence over children's multicultural requirements or needs. Prayers and hymn practices are always Christian orientated and only Christian festivals (although briefly) are celebrated and acknowledged. Such may cause confusion amongst children and could lead to segregation between them. Consider for example issues regarding children speaking in their home language. During the two years ethnography I witnessed many incidents in both schools where teachers seemed very uncomfortable and agitated when children spoke in a different language. Observations highlighted that teachers often reproached children when they spoke in Somali and Arabic, but speaking in Spanish was very much admired and praised. "As I was laying pencils on the table, a Muslim girl said in Arabic '*Jazaki Allah Khayr*' meaning 'May Allah (God) reward you'. When another child on the table heard this comment he gasped and quickly protested 'Ahhh I'm telling miss, you're not allowed to say stuff in Arabic' and raised his hand to report the incident. The teacher told her off and said in a loud voice 'you should not be talking in another language'" (O19L).

Similarly in Beale School, "I noticed a child greeting another Muslim child with '*Asalamu Alaikum*' in Arabic meaning 'Peace be with you', however, the teacher frowned and appeared very displeased as she stated 'No, Don't speak in Arabic! This isn't the Arabic school'" (O7B). Nevertheless, during an informal conversation with an African assistant in Beale school, she clarified that "although she was not a Muslim and had no Arabic family members she attended an Arabic school to learn Arabic as a means of giving children simple instructions in their home language, 'it is very exciting for me to see children's reaction when you speak in their own language'" (O20B). Therefore, if the LSA was able to see the joy and benefits of such practice on children then surely teachers cannot dismiss it. Similarly, in Beale school, teachers have previously instructed me not to speak to children in Arabic as "it will delay their English language development" (O15B). Although it is possible that teachers feel threatened by children talking in different languages as they are unable to understand what is being said, children appear fascinated when they learn new Somali words and feel excited when they talk with me in Arabic. Such field notes



resonate with my experience in primary and secondary school (see chapter 1 section 1.4). Speaking in my mother tongue boosted my self-confidence and very much supported my learning, therefore, signifying its importance on the pupils and on the learning process. The first thing I tried to do when I began secondary school was to locate other students who also Arabic, therefore, it was disappointing to observe and be part of how the two schools in this research approached this issue. Children's focus group in Beale School highlighted their opinions about learning and speaking in a different language (F3B):

Ch2: yes, I think it's nice to speak another language

Ch3: if someone is from the same country as you, you get a chance to speak to them in your own language.

Ch1: I think it's boring when we do Spanish. I'd rather do Malaysian or Somali.

Ch2: sometimes when miss does the register, we get a chance to answer in Chinese

Similarly children in St. Liam's spoke enthusiastically about different languages (F1L):

R: So do you Ch2 and Ch3 speak to others in your language in school?

Ch2&3: No.

Ch2: miss doesn't like it, she will shout at us if we do

Ch3: and its time wasting, because they'll be like yeah yeah okay, go away.

Ch1: I'd like to be taught Somali – it sounds really cool

R: why?

Ch1: because like if there's a girl who likes a boy and he's English and she might say something really funny in Somali!

Ch3: and sometimes when they're arguing a lot, the other speaks in a different language, like saying something about the other person, and they don't know what she's saying

Ch1: sometimes when they're with English people, they like to show off that they can speak a different language, because most people who are English don't speak a different language.

Ch2: Usually Maryam and Noora have a tough Somali conversation in private and it sounds nice.

According to Sneddon (2000), most teachers have had low expectations of the capabilities of children from non-English speaking backgrounds. The report, which brings together a number of studies on bilingual and trilingual children,

revealed that boosting 'community' languages is beneficial (*ibid*). Likewise, a recent report published by the Centre for information on Language Teaching and research (CiLT, 2006) which was led by Sir Trevor McDonald has confirmed that bilingual pupils achieve better exam results than monolinguals. The report added that "people who already speak more than one language find it easier to learn new languages than monolinguals" (CiLT, 2006:4). So why is it then that so many teachers see multilingualism as a problem rather than an asset? In fact from my own experience, as a child and as a mother of two EAL children, teachers have never encouraged the use of the mother tongue at home, contrary they always pushed for the English language to be spoken at home. Therefore, one could argue that perhaps due to children not practicing the home language, which according to the CiLT report is extremely beneficial, EAL children are underachieving (OfSTED, 2005). The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2000) stated that teachers must find strategies to build on their pupils' knowledge of other languages and cultures alongside developing competent and confident speakers and writers of English.

Furthermore, instead of encouraging cultural diversity and allowing and praising children for being bilingual and multilingual in a controlled setting and instead of this skill being seen as a positive, teachers appear to disapprove and sanction children who speak in a different language, hence othering certain cultural traditions (Yosso, 2006). Children are perhaps indirectly being taught to disrespect and devalue diversity, and according to Gillborn (2008), schools are indirectly demonstrating racist behaviour to its children. Similarly it appears that a particular language is depicted as superior to others, therefore, tabooing languages spoken by fellow pupils. In this case CRT would also attack the approach of liberalism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001) as schools talk about valuing multiculturalism yet appear to deny children opportunities of talking and expressing themselves in their mother tongue. In this respect Burgess *et al.* (2004) remarked that individual faith schools could lead to the development of racial segregation and could foster racism and confusion. Findings of a Home Office study (Short, 2002:566) argued that, "parents felt that some teachers not only had negative attitudes towards Islam but occasionally undermined their children's beliefs and practices". As a consequence of such behaviour Hurst, (2000) and McKinney (2004) believe that Muslim communities cannot be blamed for requesting separate schools for their children to ensure they continued adherence to the faith. This can create disintegration in the society in which

each community seeks to establish their own culture and consider it as the best. As a result, Akram and Robin, (2009:50) signified that schools have to promote deep understanding of cultural issues, to provide resources and opportunities to enable their pupils to play full parts as citizens locally, nationally and globally, and “to produce outcomes that are fair for all, not just prevent for some”.

Data revealed that a number of teachers seemed unclear about promoting cultural diversity and tolerance as well as understanding the needs of children. Such lack of knowledge was visible in Beale School when parents did not allow their children to join the after school choir. The music teacher planned a choir group as an after school club but only 3 children signed up. However, this poses a question of any consideration placed on the teacher’s behalf with regards to how other faiths and cultures interpret music and songs or even take into account the name of the school club which is usually affiliated with a Church. According to the music teacher (O7B) “Parents think it’s Christian-based and they will only learn hymns, but it’s not, it’s different songs” however, upon attending few choir practice, I realised that children were practicing Christmas songs. Moreover, some Muslim object to voluntarily letting their children join singing clubs because of their beliefs of how Islam views music in general. The overall picture seemed to indicate a lack of commitment in schools to understand diversity, therefore, enabling discriminatory practices to flourish within schools.

On the basis of the findings, this research strongly suggests that educating children of different faiths under the same roof would create a community spirit. Hence cultural diversity should be valued and reflected in the schools’ practices. This research expects faith schools to ensure that cultural norms of ethnic minorities are reflected sufficiently in school activities. Such practice is hoped to create a non-racist atmosphere and friendly environments would prevail

### **7.3. School Religious Visits**

One of the strongest challenges for both schools in this research, as identified by participants’ responses and realised through observations, is the promotion of equality and integration amongst children from different faiths and cultures. While it was acknowledged that these schools did attempt to promote initiatives to recognise cultural diversity, the question of implementation including schools’

visits to places of worship needed to be addressed. I believe that the realisation of equality and fairness for all children regardless of their faiths depended not on superficial attempts to demonstrate policies for equality, but on the quality of relationships within schools among children of different faiths. According to O'Donnell *et al.* (2006) the notion that children believe that what they do can make a difference is essential and significant. Children often have a genuine desire to find out more about others and make friendships. Therefore, encouraging children to learn about other religions will contribute significantly to community cohesion and living together in diverse multicultural communities (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Hence, following 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 attacks (see section 3.4); Gillborn (2008) argued that there were more calls for stronger intervention to improve integration and community cohesion.

### **7.3.1 Places of worship**

Rudduck and Flutter (2004) emphasised that developing pupils' tolerance and understanding of different cultures only through school activities is inadequate; children need to actually visit and have visual experiences of worship places. According to Gray (2002) school visits to places of worship help to broaden and intensify children's knowledge about faiths and practices by enabling them to experience the atmosphere of the place at first hand, and may get to meet and talk with members of a faith community. However, it was observed that during the two year ethnography, Beale School lacked visits to places of worship. Focus groups reflected on the school's weakness with regards to this issue as children discussed visits they attended three years ago (F2B):

Ch1: in year 2 we also learnt about Jewish, all the Prophets, Moses as a baby.

Ch3: they go to the Synagogue

Ch1&2: we went to the Synagogue in year 2.

Ch1: yeah, looked at the Torah, the boys had to wear the little hats and we saw them pray.

Ch2: I enjoyed that visit and we learnt a lot

Ch1: we also went to the Mosque a man told us about Islam.

Ch2: we had to take our shoes off, because its Allah's house and we can't pray if the floor gets dirty.

The above example emphasises the importance of visiting places of worship from an early age as children were able to remember details of the place from

three years ago when they were 6 – 7 years old. O'Donnel *et al.* (2006) pointed out that visits to places of worship and culture centres is important for children's personal development, linking class work with the outside world and developing skills and knowledge. They can also give children an opportunity to learn about what people believe and how they worship. Teachers' interviews also emphasised the importance of such visits for children and highly praised their benefits, for example T1B, "Oh yes! Definitely, children love it. All children went to visit that Church when they were in year 3. They remember it and really liked learning about it. It's drawing on similarities as well as differences. They gain understanding of each other and tolerance." Yet, during the two year ethnography older children were not provided with such beneficial visits as they are intellectually developing and are able to better comprehend issues of faith.

Additionally, findings of this research highlight that there seems to be a sense of discrimination against children because they are not of the same faith. Field notes taken in Beale School suggested that although the school has an Islamic ethos, the headteacher discouraged any links with the Mosque or connections with Imams and speakers (O2B) "we have Miss Ali and lots of Muslim bilingual assistants so we don't really need any speakers from the Mosque. We're also not a Muslim school...this is not a faith school so we don't want to give people and parents the wrong impression". A Learning Support Assistant (LSA) also affirmed that "no speakers from the Mosque have been into school for many years" and echoed similar reasons as the headteacher "because this is not a faith school" (M3B). In addition, T2B clarified that "When I started teaching here years ago, the school had a strong link with the Imam of the Mosque, he used to be quite prominent on the school of governors, but I don't think we have close links now...I can't remember the last time he came and spoke to the children". When asking the headteacher about this issue and chances to visit places of worship she commented (HTB): "the Mosque is not co-operating with the school. We've reached out to them many times but they are distancing themselves from the school and its activities". However, during my two year observations, I have never seen, heard or was informed of the school arranging or communicating with the Mosque. Furthermore, if perhaps the headteacher is right in that the Mosque does not attend its activities, then how is this possible if the school has planned and delivered only one event within two years. What activities are there for the Mosque to attend!

Additionally, a TA affirmed that the Mosque is willing to help and get involved as it did with fixing the prayer room and washing area, however, the headteacher limits their involvement and keeps it to the minimal, “children haven’t visited the Mosque in a long time, which’s a real shame because it’s very close to the school and they love it, but here they’re [school staff] all worried about being labelled as a Muslim school, so they don’t do it any more” (M3B). Many teachers have also reiterated similar ideologies as the headteacher, for instance (T3B) “we have Somali LSAs who deliver the assemblies, so we don’t really need visitors from the Mosque” and also T2B “I think this school tends to think that its Muslim staff has enough authority to ask or guide them in any queries that they have, so we don’t need outside help”. CRT’s critique of liberalism (Gillborn, 2008) in this case could argue that the school appears to utilise bilingual assistants not because of their knowledge, religion or connection they have with children, but mainly because they do not wish to get the Mosque involved. Similarly, in CRT’s tenet of dominance, Bell (2004) emphasised that those in the dominant culture would only support ethnic minorities, if their own self-interest is better served. This is perhaps portrayed in Beale School as multiethnic school members were hardly given any opportunities to organise or arrange events (except for one Eid party, see section 6.2.2), however, two bilingual assistants were allowed to organise and deliver Friday assemblies. In light of the dominance tenet this could arguably be seen as serving the schools’ interest in blocking outside involvements from the Mosque. It seems that the school’s fear of being labelled as a faith school or worse as a Muslim school has negatively impacted on connections and arranging for visits to places of worship and almost blinded them from the real issue and the importance of such school trips which teachers and children highly praised.

Reed (2005) pointed out that places of worship and schools should work together to help children of different faiths foster mutual understanding and facilitate better dialogue on faith issues. This country according to Coles (2004) has been striving to include children with disabilities back in to mainstream education, whilst at the same times to be allowing children from different religious groups to be educated in isolation which is extremely unhealthy. Schools ought to organise visits to places of worship which involve everyone from different religious background as a means of promoting integration. Schools visits should be organised in a way that pupils are encouraged to be more open and better understand other faiths. Drawing on CRT, Solorzano and

Yosso (2002) states that one of its objectives is to highlight the relationship between 'race' and other forms of oppression. The findings which are theoretically framed within CRT have shown that depriving children from visiting places of worship and culture centres would lead to segregation and fragmentation. Similarly, Gillborn (2005) affirmed that undervaluing and othering certain religions is a (direct or indirect) form of racism and would eventually hinder children getting properly integrated. The segregation of children and detachment from the understanding of other cultures would create disintegration, thereby splitting community cohesion. Therefore, Reed (2005) points out that critical examination of how diverse cultural aspects are presented and discussed in schools is essential.

Nonetheless, St. Liam's School has followed a similar approach to Beale School with regards to visiting places of worship. Throughout the ethnography, data revealed that children's only experience of places of worship was the Church next to the school. No observations or records were noted of school trips to Mosques, Synagogues or Temples, although geographically they were close to the school. Also in some cases, such as during Christingle, children of other faiths stayed in school and only children of the Christian faith attended the Church service (see section 6.2.1). Moreover, a bilingual assistant (M2L) affirmed that "No, no. Since I started my job in this school I never heard or seen them take children to any place or the Mosque". Also according to the vicar (M5L) "I don't personally know how strong links with the Mosques are, but children are in a country that has a Christian heritage so visiting the Church is more important...and parents have chosen for them to attend a Christian school, then I think they should engage with these things and give priority to visiting the Church more frequently". Nevertheless, favouring one place of worship while disregarding other cultural centres could be seen as create cultural segregation and making children feel othered. In this context it has been emphasised that race relations law in the UK defines segregatory practices as direct discrimination, treating someone less favourably because they are a member of a specific group (Ball, 2009).

It has been noticed that the school appears not to acknowledge other faith festivals or deliver any assemblies or activities for their celebrations (e.g. Muslim Eids and Hindu Diwali); therefore, having no collaboration with places of worship. Speaking with children highlighted some of the issues (F4L):

Ch1: faith means like give faith to someone, be nice to them.

Ch3: I heard faith sometimes from my dad and in the Mosque. It means like be caring to other people, like treat your guests good

Ch2: have you been to the Mosque?

Ch3: yeah I go with my dad.

Ch2: I've never been, what's it like? I sometimes go to Church with my gran

Ch3: oh it's nice and big and you have to take your shoes off

Ch2: heheheh smelly feet.

Ch1: I've never been to Church

It is unfortunate that one of the major inescapable findings of this research is that children of different faiths are disadvantaged from learning about religious values and discouraged from integrating with other faith and cultural traditions. Subsequently, from a CRT view, Gillborn (2005) states that this disengagement would relegate children of different faiths and cause them to disintegrate from school community. Gray (2002) believes that schools visits to places of worship with teachers' involvement can create integration and challenge disunity. In this context, it has been emphasised that addressing equality and preparing children for living with diversity at local level in a cohesive community should be the target of faith schools (DCSF, 2007). Equally important is the need for children from different faiths and cultures to come together. One area in which this can work is in promoting fair shared interrelation between faith groups and other organisations including places of worship. It is very unfortunate that the school appears not to utilise such valuable teaching resource to its advantage and enlightening children of different faiths and cultures. When asking a year 4 teacher (T1L), who is very enthusiastic about religion, of the importance of outside speakers and visiting places of worship she stated:

“Oh yes. Children who aren't Muslim would gain from it and also children who are Muslim would gain from it. By seeing we respect their faith enough to get somebody in to talk about it and visiting the place itself, it's important for both groups of children. So the Muslim children feel involved. I don't know....but I still feel sometime, that the Muslim children feel that they are the extra, they are the add on, that they don't feel like that they are in the majority. That they don't feel as strong. I feel like that they should feel that they are the majority here while I'm not saying that we should that we should try to convert our non-Muslim



children. I still think we should give Islam a bigger profile. But at the same time retain our own. They should have a stronger voice and not be afraid to have a strong voice. But at the same time we should not be afraid to say this is what we are”.

Although, the above extract highlights the importance of visiting places of worship, it also reflects on the CRT tenet of dominance. Hidden powers and hierarchies (Bell, 1995), appear to be evident in St. Liam’s School between whites and ethnic minorities. Despite the fact that multiethnic children are the majority in the school, it appears that they are made to feel like the minority with no rights. Through CRT it can be argued that those children have power, however, as stated above, schools are suppressing it (Gillborn, 2006). The primary focus of CRT is on racism, racial subordination, and discrimination (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). It is unfortunate that children have been denied many of their rights as highlighted above and from observations such as their faith being acknowledged in festivals, assemblies, celebrations, experiencing various places of worship and being tolerant of the differences amongst them. It seems that Muslim children are also being deprived of their culture being acknowledged and valued within school, therefore, being othered by the school. Similarly, both schools seem to be promoting intentionally or unintentionally a colour-blind mentality that has obscured the significance of multiculturalism. According to Fabre (2000) the goal of equality is to overcome cultural injustice. Society needs democracy to promote justice for every child to practice his/her own culture regardless of colour, race or ethnic background (see section 1.2). Religions such as Islam, Judaism and Christianity as well as other cultures should be valued and reflected in teachers’ practices and schools’ cultures and activities. The findings in the data suggest that if schools give children a sense of faith understanding, this would make them more respectful of their own faith as well as others.

### **7.3.2. Hindered Opportunities**

Although most teachers have shown an interest in the questions of faith and in learning more about world religions, they seemed to have failed in promoting multiple cultures of children from different faiths. Some teachers acknowledged the need to promote children’s cultures and to teach tolerance and challenge discrimination, yet they claimed that visiting other places of worship is “time

consuming” (T1B) and more attention should be paid to Literacy and Numeracy, at the expense of other curriculum subjects such as PE, Art and RE. Teachers admitted to the school’s weakness with visits as highlighted by T1L:

“Not often enough. And I think we should. One particular area we were thinking of is about having someone from the Mosque to come in and speak to our children who aren’t Muslims. To address them with the Muslim children present. But mainly to explain in a clearer way to our non-Muslim children what the Muslim children’s life is like at home, why it’s very different. To encourage a greater understanding and a greater respect. And I would welcome that.”

Additionally, teachers blamed the pressures of the curriculum and risk assessment forms for not organising school visits as society has imposed huge significance of children being at risk outside school grounds. For example T2L “We haven’t been to a Mosque, I think they did in year 2, but not as much within the year 6 because of the pressure from the curriculum” and also T3L:

“I think things like Health and Safety. To take the children anywhere, it’s difficult, now, if you want to go across the road to the park, you have to fill a form out and evaluate it and then fill another form out. It just puts you off. And then again when you talk about the amount of work you do to keep the ball rolling in terms of the Maths and English, to then take the time out to arrange a trip, it can be very hard”.

Moreover, some teachers explained that they lack confidence in arranging visits and filling risk assessment forms due to lack of experience, T4L: “it’s hard to organise visits as I’m worried about forms and children’s behaviour...there should be more training for outside school trips”. But when I asked about why the school does not provide training, she highlighted that “it’s time consuming and puts a lot of pressure on us, but will see after the OfSTED inspection”. However, Parker-Jenkins *et al.* (2005) emphasised that school visits should provide the chance for all children to learn about co-existence otherwise there will be tension within their communities. Signs of separation and segregation apparent in both schools with regards to attending places of worship could lead to more damage in multicultural integration. This is a further practical weakness of faith schools which has been identified by this research as lack of

opportunities for visiting places will not encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes towards other cultures. It could be argued that school visits would reduce the negative impact of cultural differences in particular, by narrowing the gap between school and the community and reduce extremist views amongst children (Abbas, 2005). Getting children to see the other side of the fence i.e. visiting Churches, Mosques and Synagogues and Temples would provide them with extra information about different cultures. Being deprived from such visits would increase ignorance and disassociation. Although criticised by many (see section 3.4), David Cameron's speech in Munich (BBC, 2011), highlighted that lack of integration has led to extremism in different communities. However, Mahamdallie (2011) believes that multiculturalism carries with it a deep commitment to integration and both go hand in hand. Therefore, when Cameron criticised multiculturalism, he is inevitably impacting on how integration is viewed. At the same time, Cameron's speech and comments appear to accuse certain communities which could be interpreted as racism (*ibid*).

The finding of this research suggests that if schools develop the respect of children for a broad range of religions and cultures through visiting various places of worship, it would provide an essential basis for understanding. According to Littler (cited in Information Daily, 2014) such visits could even trigger a significant reduction in the likelihood of pupils being involved in certain types of criminal and offending behaviour. Developing understanding and acceptance of diversity in addition to a mixture of faiths can be the keys of encouraging integration of children within schools and later in the whole community. In this context Parker-Jenkins, (2002) remarked that it is the school's responsibility to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society and to improve their knowledge and understanding of the communities they live in. Hence it is important that the schools make practical decisions to ensure accommodation of religious needs. According to Coles (2004) an improved understanding of religions amongst both staff and children can enhance mutual accommodation of tolerance.

#### **7.4. Forms of Dominance**

The London bombings of July 2005 were a crucial moment in Britain, not only because of the loss of life and injury, but because the attack involved British citizens (see section 3.4). This poses the question as to who influenced those

bombers who were also British citizens to carry out such attacks. In this context, analysis of the role of race and racism in contemporary society (CRT) is vital as stated by Darder and Torres (2004:98) that “the uncompromising persistence that ‘race’ should occupy the central position in any...educational analysis”. CRT insists that racism be placed at the centre of analyses and that scholarly work be engaged in the process of rejecting and deconstructing the current patterns of exclusion and oppression. In this section, although the focus is on CRT’s tenet ‘dominance’ within the two primary schools, other tenets within CRT framework are also discussed.

CRT’s movement is interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. It challenges traditional dominant ideologies around objectivity, colour-blindness, race-neutrality and equal opportunity (Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). It also explores the ways dominant societies are racist towards different minority groups depending on shifting needs such as the labour market (Bell, 2006). According to Gillborn (2005) CRT identifies that these power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalisation of ethnic minority people (see section 4.2.3.4). One of the findings of this research has clearly revealed that the concept of dominance appears to be one of the major sources of problems in both schools. Dominance was observed in many forms for instance; during lessons and interactions between headteachers, teachers and multiethnic bilingual assistants. Such findings is the result of discussing and understanding the term white supremacy advocated by Gillborn (2005) which is perhaps inbuilt in both schools leading to domination thereby segregation and oppression.

#### **7.4.1. Dominance in Lessons**

With the existing practices of headteachers and teachers within schools, the most serious concern is that they are likely to lead to faith discrimination and racism which would arise from the intolerance that is inevitably associated with segregation and of prejudice stemming from ignorance of other faiths and cultures. In this respect Ross (2002) declared that everyone within a school is affected by external influences; every teacher brings a set of cultural norms and practices into the classroom, which influences their conscious and subconscious behaviour and attitudes. Hence data analysis has revealed that teachers’ beliefs appear to influence their practices. For example I observed an incident which

took place in a year 4 class (Beale School) during the Lent period. The teacher was very enthusiastic about Christianity and its festivals (O16B) “[she] questioned children about Lent, Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. A number of Muslim pupils sitting asked me: ‘is it *halal* (lawful) to celebrate lent in Islam? Is it *halal* to answer her questions?’”. Pupils seemed very worried and confused about the topic and concerned that it would go against the Islamic faith. The manner in which the teacher discussed Lent and generalised the topic with the whole class appeared to disregard the fact that the majority of children were non-Christians and some were unfamiliar with this festival. According to the dual attainment targets of RE (QCA, 2004), children in this lesson were not taught to learn about religion or certainly learn from religion. The second attainment target is concerned with developing pupils’ skills of application, interpretation and evaluation (see section 2.4), however, this topic was inadequately explained which minimised children’s ability to connect or make sense of the religious message.

Also there was an assumption made that all children regardless of their faith should be celebrating Lent and in fact having to give something up for this event as the teacher focused on asking individual children what they will be giving up. Similarly a Chinese child who also appeared confused about the topic was put on the spot, and asked what he will be giving up for Lent. He initially replied with ‘I don’t know’ then when the teacher asked again he repeated an answer previously mentioned ‘chocolate’. “Some (children including non-Muslims) looked uncomfortable with the discussion.” (O16B).

Taking into consideration that some teachers unintentionally reinforced their religious beliefs and practices on children (Ross, 2002), the above example perhaps demonstrates how the teacher’s practises were dominated by her faith and influenced by her cultural norms, as she did not consider other faiths in the class. Her lack of knowledge (which was an issue raised repeatedly in the previous theme) has possibly led to the majority of children feeling segregated. Certainly, there are differences amongst various religions but culturally inappropriate instructions can intensify rather than remediate differences (Vasquez, 1990; McIntyre, 1992). Although I did not mention anything during or after the lesson, at dinner time the year 4 teacher attempted to defend the lesson about Lent. She confirmed that “whether you’re a Christian or a Muslim you should give something up for Lent”. However, as I highlighted that it would

make perfect sense for Christians and asked how she made the connections for Muslims, she said “It’s like the story of Jesus where you could connect with both religions but highlight the differences...all religions are the same and we have to give them ideas and talk to them about other cultures and practises. So it’s okay to give something up for Lent” (O16B).

During an informal conversation with the same children, I realised that they would be happy to learn about Lent as long as they were not asked to give something up for it as instructed by teacher. “It’s okay to learn about Lent and stuff like that, but Miss didn’t explain it to us, I still don’t know what’s about” and another child highlighted that “why do we have to give something up...I don’t get it” (O16B). The Chinese child affirmed “I don’t celebrate Lent so I’ll still eat chocolate” such responses suggest the importance of children being taught and encouraged to value differences. Children appeared to be feeling uneasy about what could have been a potentially valuable topic and felt othered by the teacher’s dominant discussion (Gillborn, 2005). Therefore, Pearce (2005) suggests that it is of vital significance that teachers are aware of their unconscious prejudice and stereotypes via gaining basic knowledge of different religions. This will provide important clues for teachers to adjust their teaching and have an impact on what and how pupils should be taught, as well as when and how religious information is presented (*ibid*). Additionally schools need to reconsider their commitment to equality measures and practices (Shah, 2009). Unfortunately, as many teachers seemed to be unaware of the religious/cultural beliefs of their children, they are subconsciously generalising one faith on to all children. Having lessons which are dominant by a certain faith/culture and give little consideration to the background of their pupils may not support steps to integration. Hence, it can be argued that until teachers are aware of their unconscious prejudice and familiarise themselves with religious and cultural differences, many children will be miss-taught certain religious topics and continue to feel segregated.

Similarly data analysis in St. Liam’s School has also revealed a further example of teachers’ beliefs influencing their practices. Although such race inequity may not be a planned and deliberate goal of teachers, it was neither accidental. “Children were learning about the story of Moses from the Christian perspective for the second time as they did an activity few weeks ago and got it wrong. The teacher read the story again and described Moses’ character. I was sat with a

group of 5 children, (4 of which were Somalis) who discussed and related to the story from the Islamic perspective. They told me that they knew the story from the Mosque but they got confused as some parts were not the same, e.g. that God was the burning bush” (O24L). As I have in the past worked in a weekend school (*Madrasa*), I have ideas about how they operate and what they teach (see section 1.1), therefore, I understand the pupil’s confusion. The teacher did not mention or acknowledge that the Muslims may have a similar story and failed to highlight that there may be some differences in the stories to mentally prepare children to accept the different versions. Although this lesson was repeated for the second time, it felt that children were still unsure about the story and appear more confused than before (O24L) “the Somali girl laughed and said ‘God is a burning bush!!! God’s not a burning bush in the story from the Mosque. The Imam didn’t tell me this story’”. When children asked for help I was able to inform them about the similarities and differences in both stories and clarified that various religions may have different versions. It was perhaps the teacher’s lack of knowledge of other faiths that created confusion and impacted on children’s ability to understand and appreciate differences. Link this point to the RE attainment targets of learning ‘about’ and ‘from’ religion (QCA, 2004), this lesson perhaps missed the focus of learning about Moses’ character. From the first attainment target (see section 2.4), this lesson did not help children to understanding the story from the Christian perspective nor did it explain how it related to other religions. Similarly, informal conversations with the children revealed that they did not mention the importance of the story or gave any thought as to how they would feel if they were Moses.

Similarly another contributing factor to this discussion is teachers’ unawareness of the significant amount of out-of-school learning that takes place in faith settings. Gregory (2013:2) suggested that school teachers need to know more about the knowledge and skills learned by children in their faith settings as a means of supporting the whole child. In her study, Gregory (2013) set out to investigate how 16 children from various ethnic minority communities became literate through faith activities. Findings revealed that faith permeates children’s everyday lives, underpinning language and literacy activities, fostering bilingual skills as well as culture and social skills. A substantial amount of learning takes place in faith settings and teachers need to be aware of the skills and knowledge this it brings into the school setting to as an instrument for promoting social cohesion.

In light of CRT, examples above of the story of Moses in St. Liam's and the discussion about Lent in Beale School revealed how perhaps conscious or unconscious practises of dominance were apparent across schools. One could argue for the possible tenet of dominance as Bell (1995) highlights how ethnic minority needs are overlooked when it does not benefit the dominant groups. Therefore, teachers appeared to neglect the importance of integrating other children's and acknowledging similarities/differences of other cultures as it perhaps did not concern them, their beliefs or the topics delivered. In this context, Ladson-Billings (1998) suggests that white teachers engaging in education must strive to be aware of and committed to critically interrogating their own racial privilege and unmasking the invisibility of racism. Additionally, CRT discusses hidden powers between whites and ethnic minorities (Gillborn, 2006), and the above demonstrate that children have power as they sometimes know more than the teacher but it has been suppressed.

Furthermore, the two examples also exposed how ethnic minority children within the school's culture appear to be subjected to a number of challenges, thereby making them increasingly confused and excluded (Shah, 2009). As such, an understanding of different religious practices is essential. It would have been more beneficial for children if both activities were explained and differences between faiths were highlighted, therefore, allowing children to gain understanding, learn about tolerance and celebrate difference. Otherwise, discrimination can take place through which one group will feel inferior to the other and one religion will be dominant over others. Such observations related to some of my experiences in the past where precedence was given to the Christian faith in assemblies, RE lessons, activities and displays but no recognition was given to Muslim students except for allowing us to take one or two days off school during our Eid celebrations (see section 1.4). Such forms of racism and dominance in my secondary school could not be escaped and Muslim students were aware of it just as, perhaps, pupils in this research. Mirza (2010:21) highlighted that "children of ethnic minorities may feel singled out and further marginalised rather than part of an inclusive and accepting Britain". Also it may impact on children's behaviour towards children of other faiths and could cause friction between pupils based on a lack of religious knowledge delivered by the school, thereby contradicting the value of faith in schools and schools' culture.



### 7.4.2. Staff Dominance

Data analysis through observations and interviews with school staff has revealed further examples of dominance. Observations throughout the two years in both schools affirmed that Muslim bilingual assistants made a conscious effort to 'integrate' with school staff, however, within both schools it appeared that they were still not accepted by other white teachers. Nevertheless, they were accepted by other ethnic minority colleagues. From the CRT perspective (Delgado, 1995; Yosso, 2006) Muslim bilingual assistants were segregated and othered, therefore, reinforcing and reproducing positions of domination. In order to highlight how people were othered in both schools, a number of discriminatory treatments experienced by me and some school members are provided.

It was noticed that during many informal conversations, school members were often cautious of being heard. They always looked around the room to see if teachers were listening and they appeared very uncomfortable if the headteacher walked in. For instance (O16B) "I was talking with a Somali assistant about faith elements in school, then she began whispering as soon the headteacher and another teacher walked in. Her eyes speedily scanned the room and she seemed uncomfortable to share her views in front of the headteacher. She gave me short answers and quickly concluded the topic." Similarly, an incident took place in St. Liam's School when I was discussing my research with a Somali LSA "he whispered his words as he didn't want teachers in the staff room to hear him. He said that it is very problematic in school to ask them to do Eid activities and may cause tension as 'the vicar is quite intimidating in meeting and will say no because it's a Church school'" (O16L). Additionally, field notes highlighted more incidents where ethnic minority members appeared cautious around white teachers. The example below demonstrates a bilingual assistant being interrupted and almost reproached by another teacher when he overheard her comments. In a one-to-one conversation, the assistant mentioned to me that children do not use the prayer room and in fact the majority are not aware of its existence. Another teacher interrupted the conversation and expressed his views in a very offensive and impolite manner "OH YES THEY DO! In that month that you don't eat in!!" (O9L). The bilingual assistant was silenced by his comment and appeared very terrified about continuing the discussion until he left the room. Such alarming and disrespectful behaviour

towards Muslim bilingual staff helps to shed some light on forms of dominance and the concept of being othered.

From the above examples, it seems that some school members are anxious and feel oppressed in the presence of white teachers. They felt that they are disregarded due to their voices rarely taken into consideration. Disregarding the voices of ethnic minority assistants can be considered as segregation which co-exists with racism, thereby negating any notions that Britain has become a genuine multicultural society (Doward and Hinsliff, 2004). Such behaviours from a CRT perspective can be considered as racist as ethnic minority assistants were excluded from expressing their views (Gillborn, 2008). Similarly, dominance could be used in this case as Bell (2004) argued that this tenet reveals the hidden power imbalances where white people are dominant over ethnic minorities. Teachers talked and acted in a manner which perhaps belittled ethnic minority assistants and portrayed authority and dominance over them. The teacher appeared to reproach a bilingual assistant and force his opinion on her (as highlighted earlier); this can be seen as a form of dominance and exclusion. Additionally, the example above does not only portray racism and dominance but could also be linked to what Ladson-Billings and Tate, (1995) call 'white supremacy'. It is not just about being dominant but how white people share a higher status in schools and view themselves as better ranked than the ethnic minority assistants. In the interview the headteacher (HTL) he stated "my school is my responsibility and don't get me wrong, I have teachers who don't want to take orders from TAs and bilingual assistants as they are less qualified". Therefore, it is no surprise that other members were often interrupted and their views were undermined. Such behaviour further explains why ethnic minority assistants developed a feeling of being othered as highlighted by (M2L) "it's just always been the way because we're not teachers. As you can see we're different".

Data analysis suggests that there is a growing gap between white teachers who often dominate conversations and other members who were ignored. In this context Delgado (1995) argued that the voices of persons of colour in a dominant culture deserve to be heard. In a similar view, Dixson and Rousseau (2005:10) acknowledged the importance of "personal experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge". Hence acts or words of racism can be best understood by both listening to and/or learning about the experiences of those at

the receiving end of racism. Using the CRT tenet of experiential knowledge, it can be suggested that some bilingual assistants felt excluded and felt threatened by other white school members as they were always wary of their presence in staff rooms and only ever talked really quietly with me. Such knowledge is essential as it allows us to see the world through their eyes and enrich the reality of this research (Delgado, 1989).

Essed (2002) described the term 'everyday racisms' to characterise the racism that black women face in society which resonates with the ways in which bilingual assistants appear to be treated. The Muslim bilingual assistant was interrupted so abruptly by the male teacher could perhaps be due to the fact that she was a female. Although there are several feminist theories, but they all share a common goal of challenging and resolving differences between men and women in society and according to Strobel and Davenport (1999), particular attention should be paid to gender inequality in education. Zinn and Dill (1996) argue that multicultural feminism explores how other aspects other than gender could contribute to women's inequality, such as race and class. Similarly, CRT's intersectionality perspective aligns itself very well with multicultural feminism as it discusses how gender can play a role in racism (Crenshaw 1993). Therefore, mistreatment of the Muslim bilingual assistant as evident above could be a result of her being a Muslim women.

Furthermore, another example of dominance and cultural racism was encountered during observations in Beale School. Field notes (O3B and O12B) repeatedly highlighted how unpleasant dinner ladies were to some school members. The cook was "very bossy with the bilingual assistants, and showed no manners when talking with them. Instructions were given without 'please' and 'thank you' and they seemed to look down on the Muslim volunteers and viewed themselves superior to them" (O21B). Upon asking the Pakistani assistant about the dinner time treatment (O21B) she highlighted "I think it's because of who we are really. They've [dinner ladies] always been like that and we just learn to ignore it and get on with helping our kids". This example appears to further indicate how non-white school members have suffered discrimination not only by teachers but also white dinner ladies. Similar treatments from dinner ladies to me and the children were also observed (O4B) "it was very rare to see them greeting children with a smile and their facial expressions were anything but welcoming...Even me...I didn't get away with it as were rude and looked

uncaring. They weren't cheerful when they served me the dinner, and grimly passed my plate." On the contrary, dinner ladies at St. Liam's were much more pleasant and jolly. "They smiled to the children and encouraged them to try the hot dinner. They were very warm and friendly to both staff and children and I noticed how they filled the plates and asked if children wanted seconds at the end" (O9L). Bilingual assistants talked about a hierarchy system existing in school, where white school members, regardless of their qualifications were of a better status than multiethnic members. Perhaps such practices by dinner ladies at Beale School are not simply a passive resistance to others' faith but much more of an active protection of White supremacy as emphasised by Picower (2009). White supremacy (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995) in this case would analyse dinner ladies as having not just power over multiethnic members but as being superior to them.

At the initial phase of the ethnography I wondered why bilingual assistants and school members from different ethnic backgrounds seemed slightly intimidated by the headteacher and teachers and were very wary of their presence. It then became apparent that I no longer needed to search for an answer as I already had it; I too was feeling exactly the same when I was in both schools and during the headteachers and teachers' company. I could connect with and relate to school members feeling excluded and othered as it also happened to me. From the early part of observations I realised that there was plenty of tension and suspicion about me and my research, for example in Beale School "I sensed some teachers were wary about me in school and what I was doing...some are cautious of me" (O22B), "Teachers are very unhappy when they knew I was going around the school interviewing people. I was made to feel uncomfortable as soon as I entered school 'oh you're back for corporal punishment' and teachers trying to escape my eye contact in the staff room" (O32B) and "the school is more apprehensive about my presence now more than before because I'm there more days to do interviews. It's been really stressful doing my observations, so I will not come in tomorrow to stay discreet. Teachers are still suspicious of me and my research even after two years" (O28B). Similarly in St. Liam's School "When teachers see me around the school they say 'oh your becoming part of the school'....they get anxious when I'm in lessons even though I never take notes in front of teachers" (O3L), "during my observations teachers treat me with suspicion. They stop talking when I enter the staff room and it has made me act more cautious when I approach or talk with teachers.

Although I'm not the only Muslim member in school, I feel very much alone and worried about how I'm being perceived" (O14L) and "I will keep a low profile and not move around too much so not to get questioned by the head" (O24L). In her ethnographic research, Bhatti (1999) raised issues of being teachers being worried of her presence; therefore, taking similar approaches to mine by not making notes publically (Bhatti, 1999).

It seems that reactions and attitudes towards me and other school members from ethnic minority backgrounds not only portrayed examples of racism, being othered and dominance but also a form of sexism. Considering views of feminist theorists (e.g. Collins, 1991; Allen, 2013) perceiving race as integral to gender and exploring the ways in which gender identity is constructed in relation to race, have offered an indispensable insight into school culture. During observations in St. Liam's School a bilingual assistant noticed the absence of activities for Islamic festivals, therefore, asked the headteacher for permission to deliver an assembly about Eid. M2L "I tried to explain the concept of Eid to the headteacher and the benefits on children...but he wasn't too eager and not interest" She later explained that she felt uncomfortable in his presence as he expressed concerns about the children misbehaving with her and repeated that children react more positively when a male figure delivers the assembly. She expressed a sense of intimidation by the headteacher and felt that he placed her in an inferior position because of her gender. Analysing such responses in light of recent discussions regarding the central concept for feminist theory, women have always been subordinate to men (Allen, 2013), showed the devaluation of women and direct cause of their exclusion. Female bilingual assistants were often marginalised despite organising most religious activities. Their participations were usually restricted, for example, not being able to give advice in relation to religious assemblies and their suggestions not praised as they did not match the school's faith.

By seeking to understand the causes of gender inequality, Strobel and Davenport (1999) explained the causes of male dominance, highlighting that women suffer certain injustices on account of their gender. Taking into consideration this view of feminists' standpoint, field notes indicated an incident where I was unequally treated and felt intimidated by the same headteacher. "He was displeased to see me in school doing children focus groups. So when I finished my group, I decided not to stay for the afternoon as a means of

reducing the tension. However, on my way out, I met the anxious headteacher, he said 'if I was a mother and had children, I would be home with them' he was referring to my one year old daughter" (O28L). His response could be interpreted as both racist and sexist as highlighted by Collins (1991), that feminist theorists have addressed the relationship of race and feminism in which they view race as integral to gender and explore the ways in which gender identity is constructed in relation to race. Similarly, Thompson (1998) argued that an increasing number of feminists have developed a greater sensitivity to differences between women linked to race, class, culture, and sexual orientation, among other factors. In the same context the headteacher's response, contradicts the very nature of feminism that perceive the male-dominated society where historically women have been 'kept in their place' while men have dominated areas such as education (Carby, 1989).

Data analysis based on field notes, revealed that in staff meetings, the headteacher, in St Liam's, was often dominant in his action and speech. In this context when interviewing him (HTL), he remarked "well it's my duty to instruct teachers....I am the headteacher, aren't I?" Although teachers were given chances to discuss and raise many points at staff meetings, in many cases, the male teachers had more power and voices, than female teachers. Although dominance arguably in this case was not only apparent to ethnic minority staff members, CRT could be used to shed light on the aspects of power apparent in general. As Gillborn (2008) suggests that white people have power which then leads to CRT's concept of white supremacy, the example above reveals possible dominance on the headteacher's behalf. Heaton and Lawson (1996) believe that schools seemed to show or have male dominance within the education system.

Through informal conversations and interviews with ethnic minority assistants, it was realised that they believed a hierarchy existed in school whereby headteacher and teachers are at the top and have a better status than them. For example, when asking a Muslim bilingual assistant in St. Liam's School (M2L) about the teachers she only mentioned "I believe that they've got status and better than us assistants." They don't see themselves equal to teachers and feel that there is a barrier between both. In fact due to issues which bilingual assistants have faced, perhaps relating to segregation and unequal treatment (see examples above) it is no surprise that they were made to feel isolated from

the school culture and that one group is better and favoured by the headteacher than others. In Beale School, I also noticed that white English staff have higher positions e.g. teachers, TAs, chef/cooks, however, members of school from other ethnic minorities were bilingual assistants, volunteers, cleaners and dinner ladies. According to CRT (Crenshaw *et al.*, 1995), it appears that ethnic minorities are perhaps devalued due to lack of qualifications which makes them less superior than white school members. In this context, the questioning of 'whiteness' highlighted in the views of CRT adherents (e.g. Delgado, 1995; Gillborn, 2008; 2009) in which racial pride in being white and white superiority seems to be adopted in schools and their culture. Therefore, one can wonder if a hierarchy does exist in school and it is justified to question the school's intentions about its organisation and whether it was planned consciously or unconsciously.

Furthermore, a bilingual assistant (M3B) highlighted that "Muslims hardly have a say or they're not as importance because there's no Muslim teachers", also another bilingual assistant (M4B) confirmed that "because there are no Muslim teachers and the head is a Christian so they focus on one religion". It is most unfortunate to observe that school members from ethnic minority backgrounds, although having qualifications, are devalued and through the schools' segregation and dominance and are made to feel less important/significant to white teachers and white school members. Also as both schools appear to lack diversity within its teachers to reflect the wide multiethnic culture, bilingual assistants feel they are at a less advantage and their faith not represented as other white teachers. Establishing school environments which include teachers of culturally diverse and other religious communities would provide a window through which pupils might view other faith and cultural backgrounds. So children can see that their faith and culture is being represented and respected, but both schools do not have ethnic minority teachers, only bilingual assistants and cleaners.

## **7.5. Concluding Remarks**

On the basis of data analysis including observations, interviews as well as school documentations, guided by the theoretical framework of CRT and feminist theories, findings of this chapter revealed that practices in both schools appear to encourage segregation rather than integration. The very culture of

both schools tended to reinforce discriminatory practices. The concept of unequal treatments towards female school members was visible and entrenched in school culture which indicated gender inequality. Similarly, it seems that failure to recognise cultural diversity and poor commitments towards developing concepts of tolerance and awareness of difference between faiths has negatively impacted on children's behaviour. Hence children of different faiths suffered from a number of disadvantages in terms of encouragement and acknowledging other cultural traditions. Moreover, lack of opportunities of school visits to places of worship has created confusion, misunderstanding and a sense of children being othered. As data analysis revealed, such practices could be due to a lack of teacher training on different cultures and ethnicities. Aspects of racism seemed to be apparent on many levels as school policies seem to lack integration, considerations of other religions and cultures. Also school staff's views and practices appeared to exercise dominance over ethnic minority school members and children thus making them feel inferior and segregated. Teachers' conscious or unconscious prejudice influenced their practices to disregard religious and cultural differences, hence many children continued to feel segregated.

Forms of racism need to be addressed in both schools as children are developing their value systems during these formative years. By leaving racism unchallenged, Ross, (2002) argued that white British pupils will develop a deep-seated intolerance and will be unable to value diversity. Hence, it is suggested that as it is required to reflect on religious traditions of Christianity, schools must also take into account the teachings and practices of the other principal religions and cultures. Both schools have to create an environment where all children feel valued by getting the right support to feel integrated in the school. Moreover, a school's culture is to ensure that no child is excluded or not given the right opportunity to practice his/her faith in an adequate environment.



## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **8.1. Introduction**

This chapter can be described as a reflection on what has been learnt, not merely by the outcomes but equally important, by the process of undertaking this research. Sections of this chapter include a summary of the research approach, together with key findings and recommendations. This chapter also discusses research limitations as well as suggestions for further research. Before proceeding, however, it is important to stress that this research is suggestive rather than definitive and in no way seeks to make generalisations, nor indeed to make claims that go beyond research questions and aims.

#### **8.2. Summary of the Research and the Key Findings**

This research explores the ways in which faith is manifested in school. A qualitatively approach was adopted to elicit beliefs within the two schools understudy. An ethnographic method was used which included observations, interviews, focus groups and school documentations, in order to explore the nature of the research questions which are:

1. How is faith manifested in primary schools?
2. What influence does faith have on school culture and ethos?
3. What impact does faith have on pupils' behaviours in school?

Although it has been challenging to provide complete conclusive findings, this research managed to achieve its aims:

1. Review the literature thoroughly in terms of the overarching theoretical approaches i.e. CRT and feminist theory, including the signposting of key philosophical perspectives which enhance the perspective and understanding of faith and religious culture within schools.
2. Explore the multiple ways in which faith is manifested in two schools within the North West.
3. Determine the complex influence of faith on school culture and ethos.

4. Establish the impact of faith on pupils' behaviours and understanding in school.
5. Outline recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Every aspect of this research, from its literature review, to conceptualisation through the discussion, analysis and presentations of its findings, has been guided by CRT and feminist theory. It uses the framework structured by CRT tenets to bring awareness of inequities and to explore daily practices within education. The views held by educationalists in faith schools and in cultural diversity were also considered. Using observational notes, informal conversation and taped interviews for data generation, two major themes and several sub-themes emerged in chapters 6 and 7:

#### 1.1. Fostering religious commitment

- a. Christian festival
- b. Other festivals

#### 1.2. School space and boundaries

- a. *Halal* kitchen
- b. Assemblies
- c. Displays
- d. Prayer room

#### 1.3. Discipline and Respect

#### 1.4. School ethos

#### 2.1. Recognition of cultural diversity

- a. Dress code
- b. Etiquettes in cultures
- c. Being inconsiderate

#### 2.2. School religious visits

- a. Places of worship
- b. Hindered opportunities

#### 2.3. Forms of dominance

- a. Dominance in Lessons
- b. Staff Dominance

With the goal of educational authorities being to engage children of different faiths and diversity of cultures in multiple schools (Gibbons and Silva, 2006), the

faiths and cultures of these children must be explained and recognised in schools' culture and practices. CRT maintains that the experiences and cultures of pupils from different backgrounds should be acknowledged and respected. Together with CRT and feminist frameworks (see chapter 4), different literature references were also used to assist in the discussion and analysis of the data generated. In this context, it has been argued that through the use of CRT tenets, researchers are able to unmask and uncover the reinforcement of racism, white supremacy and being othered (Gillborn, 2008). CRT's tenet which asserts that racism is endemic in societies was central to this entire research as it was of my experiences of the initial pilot and the ethnography. Similarly, tenets of dominance, intersectionality and critique of liberalism proved to be essential when analysing the data. However, particular attention was also given the tenet of experiential knowledge which explored the voices and experiences of individuals in this research. This particular tenet was noticed throughout the thesis starting with my semi-autobiography chapter and worked its way through to the two theme chapters. Utilising such tenets revealed concerns of racism and being othered in schools and acknowledged the systemic complexities which disadvantage ethnic minority children. Not only do my own personal experiences bear witness to this reality, but incidents of racism were specifically evident in the observations, participants' responses and schools' documentations.

Additionally, feminist theory proved to be an essential element to this research as it revealed issues arising from being a female researcher. It shed light on how I was perceived in the initial pilot and how I was viewed in the ethnographic research. Although there are several misconceptions which depict Muslim women as oppressed and being forced to stay at home (Rhys, 2007), I realised that in fact a traditional feminist would view this as a form of oppression and a violation of women's liberty (Yamani, 2011). This particular point was also evident in the ethnography as Muslim girls were asked to take the *hijab* off during PE lessons or reproached for wearing a long-sleeved top instead of a t-shirt (see section 7.2.1). The importance of feminist theory was also apparent in data analyses as it revealed the ways some female school members were treated in school (see section 7.4.2). Although one could not affirm that certain treatments were due to being a female alone, such features could not be disregarded for the analysis. There are strong connections between feminist theory and CRT as mistreatment could be due to being a Muslim women.

Therefore, CRT acknowledges such connection through its tenet of intersectionality, which recognises other forms of oppression such as religion, gender, ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1993).

The findings revealed the mismatch between school values and practice and how policies are empty rhetoric with regards to fostering religious commitment and cultural diversity. Although school policies emphasised the importance of encouraging religious diversity and acknowledging various religious festivals, such were examples of the mismatch between policy and practice. By focusing on Christianity as the main religion and giving it greater attention, Fancourt (2012) stated that one might assume that it would be delivered effectively, where teachers and pupils would be more comfortable and confident in tackling it. However, teaching and learning about Christianity has been singled out as an issue and a major concern (*ibid*). It was shocking to realise that both schools failed to adequately teach about Christian celebrations, despite the fact that one of the schools is a C of E and is attached to a Church (see section 6.2.1). Therefore, it was no surprise when observations and interviews revealed that diversity of faiths and cultures were inadequately acknowledged or ignored in classes, assemblies, lessons and school displays. Festivals which were fortunate to be recognised were briefly mentioned with no explanation of the message linked to the festival or religion.

Furthermore, both schools had a designated prayer room for its members to pray, however, the prayer room in Beale School was inaccessible at most times due to lack of supervision. In St. Liam's School, children were not inform of its existence, therefore, it was only ever used for group work and meetings (see section 6.3.4). CRT critiques this form of liberalism, as it appears that the school provides and caters for diversity, when in fact it is very superficial (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Critiquing liberalism also resonated with issues of the school ethos which proved to be superficial (see section 6.5). Although Beale School had an Islamic ethos, teachers continuously disregarded it and were therefore, considered as irrelevant to their teaching. On the other hand, the headteacher decided to refer to it as a multicultural ethos, thus would never be obliged to do anything extra to cater for Muslims children. In the C of E School, the Christian ethos was not visible in the school culture as teachers were concerned of offending Muslim children if Christianity was taught.

Additionally, data revealed that dominance was apparent in schools through examples of interactions between headteachers/teachers and bilingual assistants. Observations and interviews alluded to dominance of white teachers over multiethnic school members especially during dinner times and staff meetings (see section 7.4.2). They did not like sharing their opinions as they believed that they will not be considered and when bilingual assistants did share their ideas, they were often swept to the side. Similarly, white supremacy was also evident in both schools for example the manners in which school cooks spoke with multiethnic dinner ladies and how some teachers interacted with multiethnic bilingual assistants. CRT connected white supremacy with the hierarchy system (Gillborn, 2005); therefore, white dinner ladies were not dominant but viewed themselves as better and higher ranked than the multiethnic people.

The above examples often resulted in some multiethnic children being confused, feeling othered and being bullied, whilst some bilingual assistants feeling excluded and of a lower status (see sections 6.2 and 7.4.2). According to Cush (2013) RE seeks to educate children about various religions rather than prompting a particular religion. However, what has been remarkable was the lack of commitment and emphasis reflected in school of various religions and cultures as well as the minimal measures established in policy to challenge such practices. More worryingly was the inadequate training for teachers surrounding of faith and culture.

The overall commitment to promote cultural diversity in both schools was rather poor. Exploring the issue of recognising cultural diversity within schools, findings revealed that both schools did not acknowledge or teach other cultural traditions, therefore, impacting on issues of integration. In fact the school failed to acknowledge an aspect of the British culture when it arranged for parents' evening on the same night as Bonfire Night (see section 7.2.3). It has also been observed that the access of ethnic minority children to rights of practicing their own faith within schools was usually limited. No plays or after school clubs were planned as a means of involving those children and alleged prayer rooms were either unavailable or unknown of. Speaking in their home language was also frowned upon and children were constantly reproached for speaking in Arabic (see section 7.2.3). Focus groups exposed children's knowledge of the school's inadequate commitment to diversity and their frustration for not being

acknowledged. Such dominance manifested in the schools' culture is alarming, as they are expected to offer a safe and open environment to challenge exclusion and promote multiculturalism, diversity and tolerance.

Poor behaviour was a major issue at both schools and Muslim children were usually held responsible (see section 6.4). It has been argued that the influence of RE on children's behaviour is a relevant topic (Meijer, 1996) as the concept of behaviour traditionally has a religious connotation (Braspenning, 2010). Coming from a religious background, I believe that religion has a great impact on children's behaviour (see section 1.2). Therefore, there appears to be connections between teaching about religion and good behaviour as Smith (1998) suggests that religion can be linked to the development of inclusion, behaviour management and anti-bullying. Therefore, due to a lack of RE teaching and cultural acknowledgments, children were at a disadvantage. They were being sanctioned for misbehaviour which perhaps was not entirely their fault and could have possibly been avoided if schools taught about moral values, respect, tolerance which unites all religions. Similarly, evidence of racist and bullying incidents between white and multiethnic children was apparent which was due to the lack of emphasis placed on teaching religions, insufficient knowledge of cultural traditions and lack of visits to places of worship (see section 7.3). In this context, Fabre (2000) pointed out that children from different faiths can be vulnerable as they have not been given the chance to practise their own culture and to be integral part of the school environment and activities.

Findings suggest that racism amongst children in both schools has been an increasing problem. According to Pearce (2005) Muslim children are now perceived as challenging and recent research found that ethnic minority pupils view themselves as 'different' (Chadderton, 2009). This in turn positions them as implicitly threatening and outsiders. In this research, children who experienced and were affected by racists bullying indicated their feeling of being othered. This also reflected my experience of being continuously bullied in primary and secondary school (see sections 1.3 and 1.4); therefore, I could empathise with the children. Teachers' practices and pupils' behaviours revealed key cases of racism and demonstrated its effects on the children.

As disclosed by the research's findings, above examples of serious issues were caused by many factors. Lack of teachers' knowledge and understanding of

different religions and cultural customs was clearly missing in the education of pupils and the teachers alike. This research has illustrated that staff appeared to be ill-equipped with knowledge of cultural diversity which led to potentially offensive results for example calling a prophet an “unwise man” (see section 7.2.3). Similarly, lack of teachers’ confidence in teaching about faiths and cross referencing it with similar celebrations in other religions also had an impact on tolerance in both schools. Also a lot of the blame fell on insufficient training/workshops surrounding diversity of faiths and cultures, the importance of mother tongue language and planning school trips. Finally, the presence of various elements of staff’s discrimination and direct and indirect racism was an indication of schools’ non-tolerance of other faiths and cultures.

### **8.3. Contribution to Knowledge**

Much of the discussion of the role of faith in schools has focused on admission policy, if they are selective and children’s attainments in SATs (see section 1.6). One of the most important contributions this research has made is to highlight the actual manifestation of faith in two primary schools over a period of two years. This research has demonstrated originality in using an ethnographical approach to explore a faith primary schools and a community school with an Islamic ethos through the lenses of CRT and feminist theory. The richness of data due to the ethnographic approach has added significant strength to the research. The data is powerful because I was in the field observing, experiencing and living the events. Such mixture of approaches has added knowledge to the field of education and specifically, faith in schools. Hence the findings of this research have revealed the true complexity of the situation and how schools, including policy and staff, were responsible for discouraging integration and creating confusion. On the other hand, the findings disclosed how important elements of faiths and various cultural traditions are to lessons, assemblies and amongst staff. Accordingly, the significance of this research lies in raising awareness about the lack of attention attributed to RE, faith and cultural traditions. This particular point is of significance due to my upbringing and background (see section 1.2). Similarly, through the theoretical lens of CRT and feminist theory and various literature, this research unmask racism apparent within schools’ practices. Therefore, Pearce (2005) suggests that it is of vital significance that teachers are aware of their unconscious prejudice and stereotypes via gaining basic knowledge of different religions. It is also the

desire of this research to make educators, teachers and policymakers more informed about the importance of a balanced faith education in RE lessons, assemblies and other classroom activities that take into consideration all children's needs without discrimination.

Despite the fact that generalisation is not possible, lessons learned may be transferred to similar contexts (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of the research would be most useful in providing school staff with important insight about the practices within school culture and children's behaviours. It is also hoped that the recommendations of this research can be taken into consideration as a reference for schools striving to become more integrated. In addition, it is necessary that headteachers, teachers and school members work collaboratively to promote a non-racist culture and to reinforce respect and tolerance of all religions. Finally, the significance of this research and my contribution is to request all schools to review policies and ensure they promote shared values, reflect the diversity of cultures and are not discriminatory. Teaching faith tolerance and exemplifying practices of shared values, children can grow up together and respect and tolerate difference.

#### **8.4. Recommendations**

This research has served as a vehicle for illustrating how an ethnography in two primary schools was successful in revealing participants' practices, understanding and experiences when dealing with different faiths and cultures. As CRT certainly reminds us that we must listen to the voices of people being excluded and unfairly treated on the grounds of racism, this research has displayed aspects of racism and its impact on schools, schools' culture and children's behaviours. Therefore, necessary recommendations are suggested below as a means of challenging these problems.

##### **8.4.1. Awareness of Difference**

One of the findings revealed that lack of religious knowledge and cultural understanding served as a powerful explanatory factor of the rhetoric of school's policy and values (see chapter 6). A number of teachers were reluctant to teach or acknowledge elements of faith and cultural traditions due to reasons stated above. As a result this has disadvantaged children, influenced behaviour and



made them feel othered. This research suggested that raising faiths awareness and developing a sense of cultural understanding in both schools is essential in making children more respectful of one another. Being aware and taking into consideration aspects of children's faith and culture would undoubtedly create an environment of understanding and appreciation (Cush, 2005) through which every pupil would feel that their faiths and cultures are acknowledged and respected. What matters is the implementation of ideas through which schools can create an environment and activities that allow children from different faith backgrounds to explore and affirm moral values. School activities should teach children to respect religious and cultural diversity of its members thereby preparing them to live with each other in a lively, happy and integrated community. Targeting such views at primary phase is essential as children are more receptive to change and their early views will shape their future lives (Miles and Brown, 2003). The potential to develop cohesion within schools is great if children can see benefits from celebrations which relate to themselves and contribute to their needs. Hence, this research has identified teaching for diversity, especially acknowledging and incorporating faiths and cultural diversity, as an urgent need.

#### **8.4.2. Creating Mutual Respect and Understanding**

The findings of this research have revealed that one of the solutions to challenging exclusion and disintegration in both schools is to engage children in schools' assemblies, plays and performances. As a multicultural country and living in a diverse community, schools should create mutual respect regardless of race and ethnicity. According to Dagovitz (2004) it is feared that children who are educated in faith schools are more likely to be intolerant than children in community schools. Thus without this principle of mutual respect and tolerance, pupils from different religions are likely to discriminate against each other.

#### **8.4.3. Adopting Impartial Policies and Values**

This research believes that the rights to freedom of belief and education are to be respected. Short (2002) suggests that protection from both individual and institutional racism in schools might aid children's tolerance, understanding and education. However, on the basis of this research, there is evidence to suggest that schools will improve the level of integration and equity when looking

exclusively at schools' policy. According to the Home Office (2001b), school policies which have tried to strengthen the sense of Christian belonging have failed to address racism and inequality. Therefore, schools should cultivate a sense of commonality for all children and equally respond to their religious needs. Interestingly, although some teachers discussed the importance of a school ethos, findings revealed that many teachers were unsure of what the school ethos entailed and some confirmed that it does not penetrate the school or teaching. In St. Liam's School teachers were confused about how to present Christianity in assemblies, lessons and activities in an environment of multiethnic children, whereas, Beale School appeared to disregard its Islamic ethos for the fear of being viewed as a Muslim school (see section 6.5). Moreover, assemblies briefly mentioned certain Christian texts and celebrate specific cultural events without considering festivals for children of other religions. Hence, it is highly recommended that both schools need to review their policies and put them into practice - to fairly represent all faiths without causing further divisions and segregation.

According to Modood (2005) the UK has become more diverse and schools face an increasing challenge to equip young people with an education that is appropriate for them to live harmoniously in a multiethnic society. Therefore, schools need to provide more opportunities for children to celebrate their festivals and go beyond decoration and art work. Meaning and morals of various festivals and celebrations need to be acknowledged with references to how they may link with other religions is essential as it provides knowledge of diversity and teach children to respect difference. Additionally, schools should prepare young children for living successfully in a multiethnic and multi-faith community.

#### **8.4.4. Training Courses and Workshops**

On the basis of data analysis it seemed that teachers had not received recent training in tackling issues related to faith and cultural diversity. One of the findings of this research highlighted that there is a huge gap between teacher training practices and what is actually required in school. It also revealed that lack of integration amongst staff and children's misbehaviour and bullying incidents could be due to a lack of understanding of issues surrounding faiths and cultural diversity. Therefore, it is argued that teachers should be provided with specific training or workshops related to RE to enable them to interact with

multiethnic staff and respond to children's needs. Osler (2008) argued that training course should address issues of faiths and diversity. Similarly, it is believed that once teachers are more confident about their RE knowledge, they will be optimistic about organising and taking children to visit places of worship. Based on teachers' responses it was shown that they were not specifically trained on these issues at university or in school as aspects of literacy and numeracy took more precedence. This point was made strongly by teachers in interviews as they were uncomfortable with teaching RE and worried about their knowledge (see section 6.2.2).

There appears to be an urgent need to support teachers during a teacher training course and whilst in school so that they are comfortable when addressing issues related to faith and culture. For example Race (2014:219) indicated that many "qualified teachers were 'unsure' of citizenship" in secondary school as they were never taught it previously. As a result, (*ibid*) affirmed the importance of having training courses dedicated to supporting teachers with the citizenship curriculum. Such workshops which focus on multiculturalism and racism are equally necessary for teachers in primary schools as they raise awareness about cultural diversity and integration. Hence data findings called for teachers to be equipped with knowledge and provided with RE curriculum training courses to develop understanding of equality and tolerance. However, all this will depend on how schools view the importance of religious education and how far they are willing to incorporate it within the school culture.

#### **8.4.5. Equality and Integration**

Despite the efforts carried out by school staff to eliminate race inequality through the occasional religious celebration/party, in reality, race inequality is so deeply entrenched that it is effectively locked in as a permanent feature of the schools system. Built on a foundation of compelling evidence, this research illustrated how race inequality is shaped across the schools. One of the major inescapable conclusions of this research using CRT is that children seem to be deprived from real understanding of the concepts of festivals and discouraged from practicing customs that were specific to their culture. Subsequently, this disengagement and unawareness of religious festivals, would lead to misunderstanding thereby, undermining children's beliefs and practices.

Questions of exclusion and disintegration which resulted in bullying and racism amongst children should be addressed in both schools. Children of different ethnic groups should be given equal opportunities to celebrate their festivals and be informed of other festivals celebrated in schools. Activities should be organised as close to the timing of the event as possible and should be conducted in a way to enhance all children's knowledge of the message linked with the celebration. This will encourage children to respect similarities as well as differences. Similarly, findings indicated that teachers did not get involved in organising celebrations/assemblies related to other religious events (see sections 6.2.2 and 7.4.2); therefore, it is essential that they are aware and involved in plans and preparations for school events to demonstrate respect and tolerance.

#### **8.4.6. Promoting a Shared Sense of Values**

Promoting a single faith identity created tension within school members and disunity amongst children (Cohen, 2005; Parker-Jenkins *et al.*, 2005). Focusing on one religion through assemblies, celebrations and lessons, believing that they are sufficient is questionable. Teaching a single faith celebration without explaining the message and values behind it can be considered as a superficial teaching of multiculturalism and diversity (Modood, 2007). Despite the potentially hidden nature of much of racist incidents in the two schools, data generated revealed that racist behaviours amongst children, including name calling, comments and jokes about children's clothing existed (see section 6.4). Hence, whether in lessons, assemblies or around the school, teachers should promote a shared sense of faith and cultural values (Short, 2003). Therefore, one can understand that this can help clear misconceptions and stereotypes and breakdown the range of barriers, including racism.

Almond (2010) argued that for most pupils, global cultures serve as a valuable tool that helps them to cope with the difficult task of building and maintaining an identity. Understanding cultural diversity would enable them to engage with the way of life, values and ideas of others, in a form of cultural exchange. Therefore, if teachers take care to acknowledge and teach about cultural diversity with a high level of interest and excitement, pupils are much more likely to be tolerant and respectful of difference (Burtonwood, 1996).

## 8.5. Challenges and Limitations

There were some challenges encountered in this research including the absence of any previous ethnographical studies carried out in the North West of England relating to this research, and the lack of research conducted in primary schools focusing on religious elements. Thus, this research addresses such gaps. Also, due to the longitudinal nature of the research, some concerns were raised about the participants. Some staff and children have left schools and new members joined, therefore, affecting their ability to participate in interviews. In addition, there were concerns about the amount of time taken to obtain parental consent for focus groups and organising the appropriate time for children to be interviewed in school as a group, without disturbing their learning. Therefore, it was essential that each stage was carried out in a timely manner. A further challenge encountered throughout this research was the element of being a researcher in *hijab*. This affected the research as a number of teachers and school members were hesitant in conversing with me and providing information or moral support. Few teachers expressed a lack of interest in participating in the research, as they were conscious of my presence in school and during lessons at most times, thereby, slightly impacting my confidence. Finally, beginning the PhD process after a teacher training course, I was concerned about my language proficiency and writing skills. Writing academically and critically proved to be a challenge and I attended numerous courses to support me in this matter. However, the biggest challenge was being organised and finding the time and space to work on my thesis after having two children. It is a surprise and a great achievement that I have managed to get to the end of this thesis and the PhD without giving up half-way through.

In order to prevent overstatement of the findings, and to inform future research that may build on these findings, the limitations of this research need to be acknowledged. Despite, the richness of data and remarkable and appealing findings of this research, a number of constraints were encountered during the journey of study which can be summed up as follows:

- A. This research as it stands has a specific selection of schools, especially in attempting to explore the issue of faith. It could be strengthened by including other faith schools such as Roman Catholic, Islamic and Jewish.
- B. The research methodology did not include parents' perceptions and effects of family background, in relation to faith and schools.

- C. A limitation of all qualitative research is the fact that it cannot be generalised to the larger population. Although beneficial and significant data were generated, the small scale research of using two schools implies the possibility of the research findings to be exclusive cannot be denied. Hence, a more resourced research on larger number of schools is needed in order to clarify, confirm or refute the findings of this research.

## **8.6. Further Research**

Suggestions for future avenues of research are suggested on the bases of the findings as well as reflecting directly and indirectly, on some of my thoughts about the limitations of this research.

- Further research, particularly through exploring other primary schools in different geographical locations would go a long way toward developing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of how faith is manifested.
- Although this research focused on only one particular issue of faith in schools and used a qualitative methodology, its findings encourage for further research using CRT in secondary education. The incorporation of such theory in secondary schools is vital for the success of today's policies and practices, and particularly for better understanding of faith and cultural diversity.
- The most obvious avenue for future research may be an exploration of how ethnic minority teachers are viewed and treated in North West primary schools. While their experiences may be somewhat similar to those in this research, there would probably be some very interesting differences.
- Another area about which there might be an investigation between faith in schools and the local communities - a key role to play in contributing to race equality and community cohesion. A successful development of research in this area would appear to require the engagement of local community concerns.
- CRT is yet to be given more attention in current educational settings for addressing a wide range of concerns particularly school inequities.

- Considering racism as a norm, future research could take place in the form of counter stories that may provide rich description of educational experiences.

It is my hope that further research into these forms of inequities in schools will advance examinations of the way faith is manifested in two schools and move educators towards making integration, tolerance and respect of other faiths and cultures a reality.

### **8.7. Retrospective Reflections**

Given the chance to conduct a doctoral study at LJMU has constituted a challenging task, firstly as being a Muslim woman wearing a *hijab* and secondly researching a sensitive topic such as faith, particularly in primary schools. My appearance and my ethnic background as a Muslim woman in a *hijab* was a source of curiosity and doubt at the initial entry of the schools, and my presence maintained a suspicion to both headteachers throughout the two years of ethnography (paper presented at the Discourse Power Resistance conference at Greenwich University, 2010). Teachers' interaction and responses to me were short, lacked depth, and were somewhat contradictory (see section 7.4.2). My presence in the staff room was ignored by many; I however, was able to maintain a unique relationship with some Muslim bilingual assistants. They were quite friendly and treated me as a member of school staff. This very much relates to my experience in primary and secondary school as the only close friend that I had were Muslim girls due to being excluded from and bullied by other groups (see section 1.4).

To be a researcher in a *hijab* was a challenging task and I struggled during this process especially in faith schools as my dress code was different to that of the school uniform policy. However, such challenges have only served to strengthen my character, increase my self-esteem and confidence and reinforce my faith. I attempted in every possible opportunity to demonstrate that a Muslim researcher in a *hijab* is empowered and can excel in various fields of life (see section 1.5). During this research I came to the realisation that it is fundamental to be strong and courageous and always confront the challenges with fortitude and endurance. Feminist theory deserves its place in this research not only because of the research focus but due to my experience. Although feminist theory is

essential in understanding and challenging systems of inequality (Stanley and Wise, 1993), I found it challenging to locate myself with traditional feminists (Yamani, 2011) who see women dressed in a *hijab* and the long dress as being oppressed and a violation of women's liberty. Perceiving Muslim women in this way, as highlighted by Tohidi (1998), is against feminist ideology which operates on equal values and principles (see section 4.3). Unfortunately there are many misconceptions which depict Muslim women as oppressed (Mirza, 1998). However, through this research I have used myself as a model to challenge such misconceptions. Being a Muslim wife and a mother of two, qualified as a primary school teacher, doing a PhD and dressed in the traditional Islamic dress code challenges all those assumptions.

Although much of feminist literature is from a white, Western perspective, with some reservation about their views, I agree with concepts relating to women having rights and opportunities of involvement in life and social affairs, as long as it follows the Islamic framework. In an attempt to locate myself within the field of feminism I came across Islamic feminism which focuses on the role of women in Islam (Mir-Hosseini, 2006). However to integrate this feminism into the global feminist movement, secular and Western discourses were used (Badran, 2002). Therefore, I questioned the justifications for including western concepts as it would oppose Islamic principles and beliefs.

At the start of this research I was very naive about various aspects of life and felt very fragile in the face of the racism, however, I have now become more informed and experienced. I believe that the key to overcoming the obstacles faced by a researcher in a *hijab*, is to prove that irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, or geographical location, all people share a common set of values and goals.

I managed to befriend children from different ethnic backgrounds in and out of the classrooms which created reasonable comfort and respect. In that sense they came to know me better, respected me and became more confident and honest when conversing with me, as a sign of trust and symbol of acceptance. This gave me the impression of a shift from suspicion to respect, a state of tolerance and understanding within the schools' environment. As a researcher, I never exposed my notes or recordings to any school member and certainly never mentioned data from one school to the other. In fact they were unaware of



other schools being involved in my research (Binns, 2006). I maintained to the best of my ability a delicate balance between inquiry, observations, analysis and accurate decoding of information. This is one of the links between the researchers and the ethnography, whilst observing in the field as discussed by Cohen *et al.* (2007).

I should make it clear that I am not prejudiced in favour of a school teaching only one religion; contrarily, the findings have clearly illustrated my enthusiasm for acknowledging all religions. Acknowledging the importance of faith in schools, leads to recognition of the need for school staff including headteachers, teachers and other members to consider questions such as, what do we understand about faiths? What should we do to create an environment of respect and tolerance? How can we work together to eliminate racism in schools? I would argue, for these questions to be answered or challenged. Whilst acknowledging the right of everyone to practice different faiths and the need to be respectful of others, schools should consider the values and beliefs underpinning the education they are offering to children (see section 3.3). Moreover, this research has served to unmask my ignorance of literature in relation to research and education. There was a significant gap in my knowledge and understanding particularly of the views of CRT and feminist theory which were used as frameworks in data analysis. I suspect what was true for me is also true for many of researchers in education that is going unnoticed and unquestioned.

Findings of this research have broadened my thinking on racism which was observed in the two schools to move beyond mere assumption. Undertaking this research has influenced my thoughts to continue my professional development and offered me training opportunities to understand faith in schools. Although I completed a 4 year teacher training course, the topic of RE was briefly covered. Therefore, when I taught RE lessons during my degree, I resorted to knowledge I gained from my RE GCSE (see section 1.4). Although this highlights my appreciation for religion as it has been a big part of my life (see section 1.2), it also signifies the real need for more emphasis to be placed on teacher training courses about teaching RE and cultural diversity. According to Lander (2014) teacher training has little content relating to preparing teachers in comprehending their role in schools with multiethnic children or understanding race and ethnicity. Similarly, minimal attention is given to explain how teachers

can address racist incidents and how to educate children “beyond the stereotypes rehearsed and promoted in the media every day” (Lander, 2014:93). Therefore, it could be suggested that teachers are also victims in this research as they have not had the support on their teacher training degrees. However, teaching RE is like teaching any other subjects, if you do not know the information then you would research it. Despite all this effort, one can argue that attending workshop and providing a better level of training may not impact on teachers unless they have enthusiasm for religion and culture.

Without this research it could not be possible for me to understand realities which have caused a number of school members and children to be othered and segregated, including myself. It can be assumed that such process of reflection in which I as a researcher was engaged, proved at least as important as the actual findings. This process of reflection has directed me towards much broader research questions to include: How can schools’ policy and practices eliminate racism among teachers and pupils? And how can tolerance and respect be established in schools’ environment? Undertaking this research has convinced me of the need to establish more opportunities for studies to explore faiths in education. It is only through this understanding that it is possible to begin to find explanations for the above questions. To be a model for others, one must first understand oneself. If headteachers, teachers and school members reach a point where they genuinely wish to change their understandings and practices it is essential that they know the answer to the above questions.

Moreover, this research has helped me shed light on aspects of faith and race in schools. Through the ethnography I was able to provide an analytic or theoretical description which not only remains close to the concrete reality of particular events, but also reveals general features of school life, its staff and children. Based on my personal experience as a student and a researcher, I feel that this research has been an improvement in almost all aspects of my personal life and educational background. At a personal level, my study at LJMU has enabled me to develop my research skills, knowledge and review of literature about the role of faiths in schools. Through my journey in this research, I have developed a critical vision about realities in these schools. Reviewing literature has provided me with an insight of how complex and contested the notion of racism. The findings of this research have convinced me that racial incidents still

exist in the field of education amongst children and staff. My experiences and more thorough examinations of data have provided me with a deeper interest to work in the field of education in order to address racism and challenge uniquely at different levels. In order to make meaning of my experience I am extremely excited to work with other colleagues to conduct future projects focusing on anti-racist activities in schools. On the basis of the struggles I encountered during the journey of this research which have been simultaneously powerful and painful on so many levels, I am willing in particular to work with teachers who have not worked with ethnic minority children to raise awareness about the role that faith would play in schools. In this context, Gillborn (2008) has emphasised the significance of considering educators' views and practices in the formulation of anti-racist education. Indeed, I believe my greatest challenge which is worth every minute and every effort really lies in getting such educators to see reality (what has been taken for granted) from a very different perspective.

### **8.8. Concluding Remarks**

The findings of this research were framed by insights drawn from CRT and feminist theory. This was an attempt to bring some new perspectives to understandings of how faith is manifested in two primary schools. In addition, research questions concerning the influence of faith on school culture and ethos as well as its impact on pupil's behaviour in school were explored. The literature in relation to education, faith schools and multiculturalism were taken into consideration when analysing the data. These combined theoretical approaches were useful for uncovering some of the silences and problems in both schools.

A recent development took place in Birmingham as a leaked document was sent to local authorities claiming that an alleged plot (so-called 'Trojan Horse') by hard-line Islamists were planning to take over some Birmingham schools in March 2014 (BBC, 2014a). Four separate inquiries were launched into the allegations and other claims, including a Birmingham City Council and a Department of Education probe (Wintour, 2014). The leaked report suggests evidences of an agenda to introduce "an intolerant and aggressive Islamist ethos" into some Birmingham schools; however, the leader of Birmingham City Council, Sir Albert Bore, affirmed that he does not believe that there is a plot (BBC, 2014a). However, David Cameron proposed for OfSTED to be sent to inspect schools, and the government terminated its funding arrangement with

three of the schools (BBC, 2014b). It could be argued that the uncompromising report may deepen community tensions in England's second city and provoke a fierce debate on community cohesion and citizenship. Such issues make this research very pertinent to issues of faith schools and faith in schools. This research explored the situation of white British culture in two schools attempting to cater for an Islamic population and in fact not doing anything particularly well for any religion. Despite the findings of this research being almost the other side of the coin to the Birmingham issue, the findings here emphasise the importance for schools to promote values of tolerance and integration.

A qualitative approach was adopted; interviews and focus groups were carried out with staff and children within these schools. Evidence was also gathered through observation and field notes which recorded the responses of incidents and activities taking place in classrooms and schools' environment over the two years. This research revealed that schools' policies and values were in fact empty rhetoric. Additionally, racist behaviours amongst both teachers and pupils in the two schools were apparent. Schools' headteachers were also engaged with the issue of dominance and were often unaware of the racist behaviours that exist amongst their pupils. Most of the teachers lacked knowledge with regards to different religions and cultural traditions to challenge inequity issues in the classrooms. There was evidence of positive work being undertaken by few committed individuals, particularly bilingual assistants, to embed race equality; however such serious attempts appeared in some part to be disregarded. This research highlighted that there is a need for school staff to develop awareness about faiths and cultural understanding and obtain widespread training to empower them with knowledge required to consider the religious needs of all children, thereby, acknowledging and valuing similarities and differences. This may help to tackle racism and to create a schools environment of respect, tolerance, understanding and integration.

## Chapter 9

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Original aims of the initial pilot study**

#### **The original research proposal was:**

The Relationship between Parental Academic Achievement, Faith and Pupils' Attainment: Case Study of three Primary Schools in the North West of England

#### **Research aims**

1. To investigate the relationship between parental academic achievement, faith, and pupils' attainment within the North West primary faith-based schools.
2. To explore parents' reasons for choosing the school.
3. To establish the views of teachers and parents on the role of faith in the academic attainment of pupils.
4. To provide greater understanding of faith-based issues and their relationship to academic attainment of pupils

## Appendix 2

### Information about participants from St. Michael RC School.

The sample for the pilot study included 7 participants (2 teachers, 2 parents and 3 children).

Name	Who they are	Other information
Molly	Year 6 class teacher	<p>Class teacher and English coordinator. She has been teaching in this school for 7 years. Previous job involved her visiting various primary and secondary schools. She mentioned her strong Christian beliefs, attends church regularly, and is heavily involved in their activities. Molly was educated in a catholic school, both primary and secondary and she shows plenty of enthusiasm about faith schools.</p> <p>Interview was conducted during the literacy lesson and she was very eager about the research topic.</p>
Sue	RE co-ordinator	<p>Year 3 teacher and RE coordinator. She has been teaching in this school and coordinating RE for 9 years. Sue has a lot of passion for faith schools as she always compares it with the non faith school she used to teach in. She mentioned many times that she is a practising catholic and enjoys teaching in this school as she is able to explore her faith with the children.</p> <p>Sue was nervous about the interview and asked to see questions prior to interview.</p>
Jane	Parent	<p>A parent and a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) at the same school for 8 years. Jane is Chris's mother who was also interviewed in this pilot. She has lived in same geographical location of the school for 15 years. Jane attended a Catholic school and sends her sons to a Catholic primary and secondary school. She left school before GCSE's and trained as a hairdresser in college. She was also completing her NVQ level 3.</p> <p>Had a meeting with her to explain the research and it was only then she decided to take part. She asked to see Chris's interview questions and requested some to be removed.</p>
Paula	Parent	<p>A parent and an LSA at the same school for 4 years. Paula is Linda's mother who was also interviewed in this pilot. She has been living in this area all her life and actually attended this catholic school when she was young. Plans for her daughter to attend a catholic secondary school too. Started as a volunteer in school then became LSA.</p> <p>Had a meeting with her to explain the research and it was only then she decided to take part. She was still suspicious about the research topic. Asked to see Linda's interview questions.</p>

Linda	Year 6 pupil	<p>Linda is 11 years old and will be attending a catholic secondary school.</p> <p>Linda's mother asked to be present during the interview. The daughter did not object to being recorded, however, mother objected. Daughter gave very brief and succinct answers as she was not comfortable with the mother's presence. Linda continuously looked at her mum when she was answering. The mother interrupted and answered questions on her daughter's behalf continuously throughout the interview.</p>
Chris	Year 6 pupil	<p>Chris is 11 years old and will be attending a catholic secondary school.</p> <p>Initially Chris's mother asked to be present at her son's interview; however, she became busy and informed her son to do the interview without her.</p>
Ella	Year 6 pupil	<p>Ella is 11 years old and will be attending a catholic secondary school. Her mother also attended this catholic school and the secondary school which Ella will be attending.</p> <p>Ella's mother, although wished to participate in the research and signed the consent form, when I later asked to arrange a date for the interview she decided to withdraw from the research. However, she continued to allow me to interview her daughter.</p>

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Interpretation of the data of the pilot study**

This section aims to analyse and discuss the data gathered from interviews during the initial pilot process.

The interview with Molly continuously revealed how religion is “absolutely core to everything that we do in terms of values and respect for one another...our relationships with the children, our relationships with parents and other outsiders”. Similarly Sue highlighted how RE is “linked through everything...by behaviour, by PSHE by everything just everything.” This concept is very colourful and interesting; however, many questions are raised regarding its validity. For example, how could faith/religion be incorporated in subjects such as PE, mathematics, geography? Also, if outsiders are treated with respect, then how is it possible that I was made to feel excluded in the school environment and provided with minimal support?

Furthermore, both Molly and Sue have constantly affirmed that faith in the school environment is visible in “every single subject”, however, this particular aspect was not obvious in children’s interviews. When asked about how and where religion is apparent in school, all three children mentioned RE as the only subject. Chris stated “we do RE”, which incorporates “a little caption of the Bible in our worksheet, and we have to write like how like say Jesus felt”. Additionally Ella expressed her uncertainty about the meaning of religion “I can’t remember in this school doing about religions, there might’ve been before Christmas, I just can’t remember.” Clear ambiguities are visible as Molly firmly and repeatedly stated that faith “comes into other subjects quite a lot and certainly in terms of...the music curriculum and the art” whereas children only linked faith and religion to RE lessons.

Although the school has a catholic denomination and teachers discussed the integration of RE into all school activities, children using the phrase “RE” in the interviews struggled to state what it denoted. When asked about what RE stands for, children responded with “I dunno” and “I think the R stands for Religion n I don’t know what the E stands for”. Moreover, Linda interpreted religion to mean “Culture”, Ella was unsure and Chris believed that it implies “what you believe in...like some people believe in God, some people don’t”. However, when asked to provide examples of different religions, Chris mentioned “Jewish...Christians, Protestants” and failed to mention Catholics. None of the children alluded to any celebrations of religion taking place in school, which conflicts with Molly’s comments about the essence of a “faith week each term. In the spring term we did some work on the Chinese New Year, but there is a big week where we have had in the past, I can’t think of when, where we have had visitors and speakers where we do celebrate other cultures”. Molly also discussed how the school values “learning about new cultures and...new faiths” yet such concepts were absent from children’s interviews.

“You can walk into a school and you know instantly and you know those values are at the core”, this quote from Molly affirmed her beliefs regarding faith schools. Acker (1999) also highlights the importance of ethos to school values. As highlighted in the table regarding participants’ biographical information, it is no surprise to see Molly’s passion for faith. She has been educated in a catholic setting, both in primary and secondary and also sent her son to a catholic school. Her enthusiasm and confinement in religion is very much apparent in her interview “Religion is our whole ethos of what we are about, the kind that plays a large part in our relationships with the children, our relationships with parents and other outsiders” Also regarding the significance of faith in school environment “Well it certainly helps to promote the school ethos because if our school ethos is one where we nurture people’s potential, we respect each other as individuals, we teach love we kind of demonstrate loving and caring.” A similar philosophy was also apparent in Sue’s interview as she enthused: “I know that when you walk in, it’s a different kind of atmosphere but it, it generally is, it’s just got a more caring atmosphere, a more caring nature about it and more friendly”. Sue has been teaching in St Michael and coordinating RE for 9 years, hence highly esteeming faith schools. Due to being a practising catholic Sue values and enjoys linking faith with education “I’ve enjoyed teaching here more because I am a Catholic and I practice in Catholic, it’s been nice for me to explore my faith with the children and although I think faith is very personal you know each to their own, it has been nice to just explore... you know talk to the children about my faith and what I believe.” Both interviewees share the same views regarding how faith schools are different to non-faith schools. From personal experience of being in that Roman Catholic school and other faith schools, a striking difference in the atmosphere was scarcely noticed to the atmosphere of a community school. A major difference observed could be the numerous religious displays, symbols and statues positioned throughout a faith school and in every class room which would not be visible in a community school. Repetition of the same concept “you could actually sense just by walking through the door which were the faith schools...in terms of just the atmosphere around and discipline” reveals the extent of stereotypes and labels present about faith schools (Marples 2005; Crace 2007).

Earlier in the pilot study, the class teacher mentioned that faith schools are those which “include values which the schools would want to promote”. Such a statement raised my curiosity regarding how and why values can be implemented in a school culture. Also I wondered if there were any contradictions regarding this comment and how I felt excluded from the school community by the staff. There were many occasions when St Michael and its teachers disappoint and very much frustrate me with regards to interview appointments “at reception they took my number and told me Molly will call me...but guess what, she never did. Then she got really angry when I came in without any prior appointments.” The pilot study felt like a marathon, “Arghhhhhh this is rubbish, I’m no good at this”, I was regularly racing after teachers to complete the interviews although they were very optimistic about the idea at the start. The RE



coordinator in particular, kept rearranging the time of the interview “I have a feeling she doesn’t want to see me” (Log 4). On attempting to partake in other school activities, Molly informed me that it would be “inappropriate and would only raise parents’ curiosity” if I were to attend a parents’ evening.

Phenomenologically, this is interesting as it is not just a question of adopting a stance of neutral observer, but rather actually engaging in that context and actively interpreting what people are saying, the sense they are making of me and my presence. Phenomenology is sometimes considered a philosophical perspective as well as an approach to qualitative methodology. It is a school of thought that emphasises a focus on people’s subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. Applied to this research, phenomenology is the study of phenomena: their nature and meanings (Brockbank and Mc Gill, 2007). It focuses on the way things appear to us through experience. At the root of phenomenology, “the intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms — to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself allowing the essence to emerge” (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998:96). For Hammersley (2000) the phenomenologist is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved. Bentz and Shapiro (1998), Kensit (2000), Sadala and Adorno (2001) have pointed out that the researcher must allow the data to emerge - doing phenomenology implies capturing rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings. This presented the birth of a reflexive engagement as I was also continuously making sense of the other’s presence and actions. This research shifted towards a phenomenological perspective, employing Heidegger’s approach who argues for researchers to become embedded in the social relationships, and its inescapable understanding (Finlay, 2002). This, therefore, enabled me to describe human/school activities and gain a fuller understanding of the phenomenon under investigation as well as myself.

Although the teacher highly praised children’s behaviour in a faith school “they are recognised for their well-behaved children, they are able to maintain high discipline throughout all aspects of school”, I was astonished when Molly expressed concerns about conducting the interview away from her classroom as the children were very challenging and continuously misbehave. Therefore, the interview took place during the Literacy lesson while pupils were working with the Teacher Assistant (TA). Whilst being interviewed, I had to pause the taping over four times as Molly spoke to the misbehaving class. It was observed that the TA had little control over the classroom and children were no longer focused on their work. Questions were repeated many times as the level of noise was steadily increasing and children were being disruptive. The above observations revealed noticeable contradictions from what the teacher stated earlier regarding the fantastic behaviour and discipline in a faith school to the demonstrated behaviour in her classroom. It appears that at most times whenever faith schools are mentioned, ‘good behaviour’

follows straight afterwards. Jackson (2003) highlights that faith schools are state funded for instrumental reasons to do good behaviour and questions such justification. Additionally, in a survey conducted by Canavan (1994) it was found out that parents were attracted to faith schools because of discipline, therefore, selected catholic schools due to good behaviour.

Furthermore, Sue highlighted that parents do not enrol their children in this school because of its Catholic faith "I don't think they have any expectations at all because a lot of them don't regard it as important". However, during Jane's interview it was obvious that school denomination did influence choice "Yeah, yeah, with it being a Catholic school, yeah...You see I had a Catholic education myself so to me I just needed that little bit and cos I've got really strong Catholic background as well". Sue believes that parents lack "great expectations about Religious Education", yet Jane expressed a deep awareness and importance of the religious activities taking place in school "we have lots of mass service and... like we do lots of religious education and things like that, we say prayers everyday...erm before lunch and home time...it makes the children feel more homely and PART of something". Due to those conflicting ideas, my research explored how RE coordinators envisages the RE curriculum in both schools.

The pilot study revealed that both school denomination and curriculum play a significant role in shaping children's values and attitudes. However, to have this answer only stated in an interview is not enough and I wished to delve deeper into this concept in an attempt to explore how faith is manifested within children's learning. In many interviews it was emphasised that faith schools create environments for "treating each other with respect, treating the school with respect ... loving each other... showing forgiveness" (Sue's interview). Also, those schools are "more caring [and], friendlier." However, are those characteristics not also present and targeted in all schools be it faith or not? Therefore, adapting the methodology and embarking on an ethnographic study enabled me to observe the qualities present in school and provided further opportunities to explore differences between a faith and non-faith school.

Although the head teacher was very welcoming and expressed what appeared to be a genuine interest and excitement about the nature of my research, he was somewhat over-effusive when probing into my background. For example, he asked numerous questions regarding my choice of topic, school and school faith. He also enquired about my experience in faith schools and the strategies I have put in place to ensure that my own faith does not interfere with the research or intertwine with my data collection. At the end of the meeting which lasted roughly an hour, "I felt intimidated by his questioning at this early stage and his technique of making me feel inferior". For example, I was told with a condescending tone that there are plenty of Christian faith schools in the North West, yet "Muslims need to fight their corner" in order to run a Muslim school.

The two parents Jane and Paula (who were LSAs working in the same school) were suspicious about the theme of the research and initially refused to take part in the pilot. In an attempt to clear any misconceptions, I allocated a time for the LSA to discuss the pilot. From the questions asked and issues raised, it was obvious that many held what appeared to be serious prejudices in relation to the meaning of this research, the pilot study, the implied ethical issues and my PhD degree more generally. Therefore, "I had to choose phrases very cautiously in order to defend my methodology and took great care in using basic language to communicate the message of the interviews". However, I still sensed that both LSAs remained troubled by the idea of conducting interviews with children. Paula, for example, was harsh in criticising the letter and consent forms sent out to parents (appendix 3 & 4); although approval was granted by the supervisory team and the University Ethics Committee. The parent also disagreed with the methodology of the research in that "children are too fragile to be interviewed". Although those two parents gave consent for their children to participate, Jane requested that some questions be removed from the list and Paula objected to her daughter being tape recorded and specifically asked to sit with her child while the interview was being conducted for "extra encouragement". I assume this move was a cunning attempt from Paula to retain control and provide her with a sense of security and influence upon the child's responses.

Prior to the pilot study, I felt confident as I possessed a degree in Primary Education with QTS and had a demonstrable track-record of working with children. Moreover, I previously visited and trained in St Michael during my teaching degree. However, I was made to feel that none of the above mattered, as I was gradually prevented from attending parents' evenings and regular morning assemblies. I was most surprised to discover that the class teacher chose not to mention, in the early days of the pilot, that the two LSAs were also parents of pupils in her class. "Surely the teacher could have provided some support with those two parents, but she only informed me of this information towards the end of the pilot", leaving me in the hopeless position of needing to persuade them.

Furthermore, as I seized the opportunity of attending the awards assembly as an attempt to encourage parents to participate in the study, I was astounded and even quite upset that the class teacher who while firstly instructing me to sit at the back with the parents, just prior to the start of the assembly gave me the choice of sitting with the teachers. Clearly, sitting at the back would only serve to increase the perception among parents that I was merely a stranger in school and raise their suspicions about my position in the school and whether or not the school accepts me. This, I would argue, only impacted negatively on the potential number of participants I could have had. While I elected to sit with the teachers, in order to be viewed as a member of the school and hence gain some trust, I was further deflated by the manner in which some parents conceived my research and subsequently treated me. Upon introducing myself to a group of parents after the assembly, I sensed that many were anxious and made various excuses to leave. Whilst reassuring parents about the importance of confidentiality both during and following interviews, I noticed one parent "literally

fleeing from the hall towards the school gate as her only means of escaping my attention and hence the research”.

Further into the pilot study, I was beginning to feel excluded from the school community and sensed that teachers hurried me to complete the data collection. I do not think I was seen as a threat by male teachers; my presence was simply ignored by most of them. I was repeatedly given interview appointments with teachers, only to realise that the school was closed, teachers were busy or on school trips. It felt like a ‘wild goose chase’ and I sensed that they did not wish to be interviewed or provide any support. Similarly ref 4 and ref 5 have encountered various challenges whilst gaining access to the setting and have experienced obstacles being accepted. This impacted on the number of parents participating in the project and the time available to sequence and carry out the interviews.

Furthermore, the Education Reform Act (1988) deliberately located RE as fundamental to the entire curriculum, prior to the National Curriculum. According to the LEA’s Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, pupils in schools other than voluntary aided should be taught RE. What is statutory is that religious education should be taught; but its content is left to the framers of the Agreed Syllabuses. According to White (2010) one of the aims of religious education is to contribute to pupils’ general ethical learning. Additionally, from an academic perspective, Hewer (2001) highlights the need for exploring the role of faith in RE and education in general

**Appendix 4  
Ethnography Key**

This is an example of what codes it the ethnography refer to.

Headteachers' interview	HTB	Beale School
	HTL	St. Liam's School
Teachers' interview	T1B	Beale School
	T2B	
	T3B	
	T1L	St. Liam's School
	T2L	
	T3L	
Other school members' interview	M1B	Beale School
	M2B	
	M3B	
	M1L	St. Liam's School
	M2L	
	M3L	
Children's focus groups	F1B	Beale School
	F2B	
	F3B	
	F1L	St. Liam's School
	F2L	
	F3L	
Documentations	D1B	Beale School
	D2B	
	D3B	
	D1L	St. Liam's School
	D2L	
	D3L	
Observations	O1B	Beale School
	O2B	
	O3B	
	O1L	St. Liam's School
	O2L	
	O3L	

**School Documentations:**

Beale School		St. Liam's School	
D1B	RE policy	D1L	RE policy
D2B	School Effectiveness Policy	D2L	Assembly File
D3B	Prayer room newspaper article	D3L	School prospectus
D4B	School prospectus	D4L	Uniform policy
D5B	Swimming letter	D5L	Parents' evening bonfire
D6B	Uniform policy		

## **Appendix 5**

### **Headteacher interview – St. Liam’s School**

#### **Faith schools**

1. This is a faith-based school, what is meant by that?
2. As the headteacher of this school, how do you interpret faith?
3. Does school faith appear in school ethos?
4. Is it portrayed/ practised in school/classroom?
5. Does faith/school ethos influence school culture? (rituals, expectations, relationships, curricular activities and decision-making processes).
6. To what extent are aspects of faith apparent within the school community?
7. What is your opinion regarding faith schools?
8. What do you think are the differences between a faith school and a county school?
9. Were there any occasions where decisions you had to take, as a headteacher in this school, contradicted your faith?

#### **What affects the makeup of the school**

10. When parents enrol their children in this school, what do you think their expectations are regarding Religious studies?
11. How do you ensure that children feel treasured/valued in your school?
12. How do you create the environment for this to happen?
13. How have you acknowledged various festivals in school?
14. Do you think it will impact on children’s learning?
15. What has the school done to accommodate for the high percentage of Muslim children?
16. How do you utilise school worship in your school?
17. Attendance appears to have a significant place in this school, talk to me about it?
18. Your school recently had a faith inspection, what was the outcome?

#### **Faith effecting children’s education/behaviour**

19. Do you feel that faith has a role in encouraging a child to learn?
20. What is your interpretation of school culture?
21. Is the school culture influenced by the school faith?
22. Do you think there is a link between school culture and learning?
23. Tell me about the general nature of children’s behaviour in school?
24. How does faith affect/impact on their behaviour?

Is there anything else you wish to add or comment on which has not been mentioned in the interview?

## **Appendix 6**

### **Headteacher interview – Beale School**

1. As the headteacher of this school, how do you interpret faith?
2. What do you think are the differences between a faith school and a county school?
3. What is your opinion regarding faith schools?
4. What do you think a school needs to become a faith school?
5. This is a community school, but has an Islamic ethos, what does that mean?
6. What is the school ethos?
7. How is it apparent/practised in school?
8. How is it apparent/practiced in classrooms?
9. Does faith/school ethos influence school culture? (rituals, expectations, relationships, curricular activities and decision-making processes).
10. Were there any occasions where decisions you had to take, as a headteacher in this school, contradicted your faith?

### **What affects the makeup of the school**

11. When parents enrol their children in this school, what do you think their expectations are regarding Religious studies/ethos?
12. How do you ensure that children feel treasured/valued in your school?
13. How do you create the environment for this to happen?
14. How have you acknowledged various festivals in school?
15. Do you think it will impact on children's learning?
16. What has the school done to accommodate for the high percentage of Muslim children?
17. How do you utilise school worship in your school?
18. Attendance appears to have a significant place in this school, talk to me about it?
19. Your school recently had an inclusion inspection, what was the outcome?

### **Faith effecting children's education/behaviour**

20. Do you feel that faith has a role in encouraging a child to learn?
21. What is your interpretation of school culture?
22. Is the school culture influenced by the school faith?
23. Do you think there is a link between school culture and learning?
24. Tell me about the general nature of children's behaviour in school?
25. How does faith affect/impact on their behaviour?

Is there anything else you wish to add or comment on which has not been mentioned in the interview?

**Appendix 7**  
**Teachers interview – St. Liam’s School**  
**Faith schools**

1. This is a faith-based school, what is meant by that?
2. Does school faith appear in school ethos?
3. Is it portrayed/ practised in school/classroom?
4. To what extent are aspects of faith apparent within the school community?
5. What do you think are the differences between a faith school and a county school?
6. Were there any occasions where decisions you had to take contradicted your faith?

**School culture impacting on learning**

7. What is your interpretation of school culture?
8. Does faith/school ethos influence school culture? (Rituals, expectations, relationships, curricular activities and decision-making processes).
9. Do you think there is a link between school culture and learning?
10. How are displays used to encourage learning?
11. How are assemblies organised?
12. Do assemblies have a religious theme to them?

**Role of faith in academic achievements/attainment**

13. Is the aspect of ‘faith’ incorporated in the school curriculum? If so, how?
  14. Is it taught in the classroom? If so, how?
  15. Do you think the school curriculum is more important in shaping children’s attitude than school denomination?
  16. What strategies have you used to accommodate for the Muslim children in your classroom?
  17. Do children have a chance to practise their religion in the class/school?
  18. How is RE linked to school life?
  19. Do you plan for visitors/speakers from other faith groups to speak to the children?
  20. Have children visited any places of worship?
  21. How do you celebrate various festivals with children?
  22. What support mechanisms are available for EAL? SEN?
- Is there anything else you wish to add or comment on which has not been mentioned in the interview?



**Appendix 8**  
**Teachers interview – Beale School**  
**Faith schools**

1. What do you think are the differences between a faith school and a county school?
2. What is your opinion regarding faith schools?
3. Do aspects of faith appear in school ethos?
4. Is it portrayed/ practised in school/classroom?
5. To what extent are aspects of faith apparent within the school community?
6. Were there any occasions where decisions you had to take contradicted your faith?

**School culture impacting on learning**

7. What is your interpretation of school culture?
8. Does the school ethos influence school culture? (Rituals, expectations, relationships, curricular activities and decision-making processes).
9. Do you think there is a link between school culture and learning?
10. How are displays used to encourage learning?
11. How are assemblies organised?
12. Do assemblies have a religious theme to them?

**Role of faith in academic achievements/attainment**

13. Is the aspect of 'religion' incorporated in the school curriculum? If so, how?
14. Is it taught in the classroom? If so, how?
15. Do you think the school curriculum is more important in shaping children's attitude than school denomination?
16. What strategies have you used to accommodate for the Muslim children in your classroom?
17. Do children have a chance to practise their religion in the class/school?
18. How is RE linked to school life?
19. Do you plan for visitors/speakers from other faith groups to speak to the children?
20. Have children visited any places of worship?
21. How do you celebrate various festivals with children?
22. What support mechanisms are available for EAL? SEN?

Is there anything else you wish to add or comment on which has not been mentioned in the interview?

## **Appendix 9**

### **School community members interview – St. Liam’s School**

#### **Choice of school**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your role in this school?
2. How did you find out about this school?
3. Why did you choose this school?
4. How long have you worked here for?
5. Do you work in the school every day?
6. This is a faith-based school, what is meant by that?
7. What is your opinion regarding faith schools?
8. What do you think are the differences between a faith school and a county school?
9. Do you think there should be more faith schools?

#### **Learning and school culture**

10. To what extent are aspects of faith apparent within the school community?
11. Do you think there is a link between faith and academic achievements?
12. What has the school done to accommodate for the high percentage of Muslim children?
13. What is your interpretation of school culture?
14. Is the school culture influenced by the school faith?
15. Do you think celebrating different festivals in school has an impact on children?

#### **Discuss issues regarding school dinner**

16. What foods are available for children?
17. How does the school cater for special food requirements?
18. Who supplies the food for the school?
19. Is there a food schedule?
20. Are parents aware of these food options?
21. Does such catering encourage parents to select this school for their children?
22. How do you think children view the food?

Is there anything else you wish to add or comment on which has not been mentioned in the interview?

## **Appendix 10**

### **School community members interview – Beale School Choice of school**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your role in this school?
2. How did you find out about this school?
3. Why did you choose this school?
4. How long have you worked here for?
5. Do you work in the school everyday?
6. What is your opinion regarding faith schools?
7. What do you think are the differences between a faith school and a county school?
8. Do you think there should be more faith schools?

### **Learning and school culture**

9. To what extent are aspects of faith apparent within the school community?
10. Do you think there is a link between faith and academic achievements?
11. What has the school done to accommodate for the high percentage of Muslim children?
12. What is your interpretation of school culture?
13. Is the school culture influenced by the school faith?
14. Do you think celebrating different festivals in school has an impact on children?

### **Discuss issues regarding school dinner**

15. What foods are available for children?
16. How does the school cater for special food requirements?
17. Who supplies the food for the school?
18. Is there a food schedule?
19. Are parents aware of these food options?
20. Does such catering encourage parents to select this school for their children?
21. How do you think children view the food?

Is there anything else you wish to add or comment on which has not been mentioned in the interview?

**Appendix 11**  
**Children interview – St. Liam’s School**

School culture

1. Do you like school?
2. What do you think is the purpose of school?
3. Do you think activities you do in school help your learning?

Learning about religion/faith

4. Have you heard of the word faith?
5. What do you think the word religion means?
6. How do you learn about religion in school?
7. What does RE stand for?
8. What kind of things do you learn about in RE?
9. What religions or celebrations have you learnt about?
10. What festivals do you celebrate in school?
11. Do you have friends in school who are not from Britain?
12. Do you have friends in school who have a different religion to you?
13. Have you heard other languages spoken in school, apart from English?
14. Have you had a chance to speak in a different language to English?
15. Do you notice words written in other languages on display boards?

Practising faith

16. What type of assemblies did you have?
17. Which assembly did you enjoyed the most?
18. Do you have a prayer room in school?

Is there anything else you want to say or add in this interview?

## **Appendix 12**

### **Children interview – Beale School**

#### School culture

1. Do you like school?
2. What do you think is the purpose of school?
3. Do you think activities you do in school help your learning?

#### Learning about religion/faith

4. Have you heard of the word faith?
5. What do you think the word religion means?
6. How do you learn about religion in school?
7. What does RE stand for?
8. What kind of things do you learn about in RE?
9. What religions or celebrations have you learnt about?
10. What festivals do you celebrate in school?
11. Do you have friends in school who are not from Britain?
12. Do you have friends in school who have a different religion to you?
13. Have you heard other languages spoken in school, apart from English?
14. Have you had a chance to speak in a different language to English?
15. Do you notice words written in other languages on display boards?

#### Practising faith

16. What type of assemblies did you have?
17. Which assembly did you enjoyed the most?
18. Do you have a prayer room in school?

Is there anything else you want to say or add in this interview?

## Appendix 13

### Participant's information sheet and consent form – school members



## Liverpool John Moores University

Dear School members:

My name is Safia Awad. I have completed a 4 year teacher training degree and currently studying a PhD at Liverpool John Moores University. You have been invited to take part in a study looking at "the ways in which 'faith' manifests itself in school, school culture and the interactive process of learning". The project is supervised by appropriately qualified members of the university staff.

Although faith schools have existed for many years, there is little research conducted to identify the relevance or the impact of faith-based education on school culture and children's learning. Little evidence has been found regarding the role that faith plays in pupils' lives as well as the schools and community. This has long been apparently ignored and thus it is the aim of this study to identify how faith is apparent in school and how it is visible in children's education.

The study will involve lesson observations, interviews being conducted with various staff members and group interviews with various children. Interviews with the school community members will be carried out by myself in a quiet place of the school and will focus on: the school environment and the involvement in children's education. The interview is hoped to last no longer than 45mins and will be conducted during the school time.

The research forms part of my PhD, however, names of participants will remain confidential and it will not be possible to identify schools or individuals. Information and data collected will be saved in a document containing a password.

Participation in this study is voluntary, however, should you wish to do so, you have the right to withdraw at any time. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will make myself available to discuss the study as soon as possible.

Please complete the "staff/school members Consent form" to state your participation in this research. Your assistance in this research would be gratefully appreciated.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs S. Awad

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT FORM



**Title of research:** a study of the ways in which 'faith' manifests itself in school, school culture and the interactive process of learning.

**Researcher:** Safia Awad. Faculty of Education, Community and Leisure

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.
3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study

✓

Name of Participant  
Signature

Date

Name of Researcher  
Signature

Date

**Appendix 14**  
**Participant's information sheet and consent form – Parents**



Liverpool John Moores University

Dear Parent/Carer:

My name is Safia Awad. I have completed a 4 year teacher training degree and I am currently studying for a PhD at Liverpool John Moores University. I would like to invite your child to take part in a study looking at "the ways in which 'faith' manifests itself in school, school culture and the interactive process of learning". The project is supervised by appropriately qualified members of the university staff.

Although faith schools have existed for many years, there is little research conducted to identify the relevance or the impact of faith-based education on school culture and children's learning. Little evidence has been found regarding the role that faith plays in pupils' lives, as well as in schools and the wider community. Apparently, this has long been ignored and thus it is the aim of this study to identify how faith is apparent in school and how it is visible in children's education.

The study will involve lesson observations, interviews being conducted with various staff members and group interviews with various children. The group interviews will be carried out by myself and will include a group of 3 children discussing: their understanding of religion and how they learn about faith. In order not to disrupt your child's education, the interview will last no longer than 20mins and will be conducted during school time.

The research forms part of my PhD, however, names of participants will be anonymised and remain confidential, and so it will not be possible to identify schools or particular individuals. Information and data collected will be saved in a document containing a password.

Participation in this study is voluntary, however, should your child wish to withdraw at any time, he/she has the right to do so. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to notify the class teacher and I will make myself available to discuss the study as soon as possible.

Please complete the "Parent/Carer Consent form" to state your child's participation in this research. Your assistance in this research would be gratefully appreciated.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs S. Awad



LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT FORM



**Title of research:** a study of the ways in which 'faith' manifests itself in school, school culture and the interactive process of learning.

**Researcher:** Safia Awad. Faculty of Education, Community and Leisure

**Parent/Carer Consent Form**

Have you read information about this project?

Yes/No

Do you understand what this project is about?

Yes/No

Have you asked all the questions you want?

Yes/No

Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?

Yes/No

Do you understand that your child's participation is voluntary?

Yes/No

Do you understand that your child can withdraw at any time?

Yes/No

Do you give permission for your child to take part in the study?

Yes/No

Parent or guardian must write their name here if they are happy for their child to participate.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 15**  
**Participant's information sheet and consent form – Children**



Liverpool John Moores University

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Mrs Awad, a researcher doing a project at Liverpool John Moores University. Would you like to take part in a project looking at 'faith, school and children's learning'?

The project will involve me watching some of your lessons and doing a group interview with you and other children. Questions in the interview will be about:

- What you understand about religion
- How do you learn about religion

The interview will last about 20mins and will be done in your classroom, during the school time.

In my research, I will not mention your name and so it will be kept private. Also the information you tell me will be kept in a safe place and no one will be able to read it.

I would be very pleased if you take part in my research. But you can stop at any time and you do not have to answer any questions that would make you uncomfortable.

Please do not forget to sign the "Young Child's Consent form" to tell me that you will be taking part in my research.

Thank you very much for all your help ☺

Mrs S. Awad

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT FORM



**Young Child's Consent Form**

Have you read information about this project?

Yes/No

Has somebody else explained this project to you?

Yes/No

Do you understand what this project is about?

Yes/No

Have you asked all the questions you want?

Yes/No

Do you understand it's OK to stop taking part at any time?

Yes/No

Are you happy to take part?

Yes/No

If any answers are 'no' or you don't want to take part, don't sign your name!

If you do want to take part, you can write your name below

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The researcher who explained this project to you needs to sign too.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 16

### Participant's information sheet and consent form – School headteacher



Liverpool John Moores University

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir/Madam:

My name is Safia Awad. I have completed a 4 year teacher training degree and currently studying a PhD at Liverpool John Moores University. Your school is invited to take part in an ethnographic study looking at "the ways in which 'faith' manifests itself in school, school culture and the interactive process of learning" and I would like to ask you whether you would like your school to be involved in this project. You feel reassured to know that the study is supervised by appropriately qualified members of the university staff.

Although faith schools have existed for many years, there is little research conducted to identify the relevance or the impact of faith-based education on school culture and children's learning. Little evidence has been found regarding the role that faith plays in pupils' lives as well as the schools and community. This has long been apparently ignored and thus it is the aim of this study to identify how faith is apparent in school and how it is visible in children's education.

The study will involve the researcher attending the school one day a week and observing lessons and assemblies. Interviews will also be conducted with various school members and children at a later stage of the research.

The research forms part of my PhD, however, names of participants and school will remain confidential; therefore, it will not be possible to identify schools or individuals. Information and data collected will be saved in a document containing a password.

It would be an honour for me to conduct my research in your school and all your assistance in this study would be gratefully appreciated. Please complete the "School Consent form" stating your school's participation in this research.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs S. Awad

## School Consent Form



I, \_\_\_\_\_,

Headteacher of

\_\_\_\_\_

give permission for Safia Awad to conduct her PhD research in this school.

I have been informed about the project and understand that the school's identity will remain confidential.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_