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An evaluation of the transferability of the interpretive approach to teachers' continuing professional development.

Joyce Miller

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Acknowledgements

Abstract:

This is a practitioner research project set in the humanities faculty of a school in a northern town where riots took place in 2001. The aim was to evaluate the transferability of the interpretive approach to teachers' continuing professional development and to see how far it increased their understanding of and relationship with their local communities.

Qualitative data were gathered using a range of methods including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The teachers engaged in ethnographic-type activities in their participant observation of groups and interviews with representatives and their students. The principles of the interpretive approach – representation, interpretation and reflexivity – underpinned the design of the programme and the data analysis.

The research found that teachers' understanding of the diversity of communities was increased. There was little evidence of increased understanding of 'the group' in relation to individuals and the tradition. There was little formal evidence of a deeper understanding of concepts, of 'oscillation' or of personal edification. There were significant professional benefits in increased confidence, dealing with controversial issues and in developing community education. The teachers demonstrated open-mindedness and a positive attitude to pluralism.

Further questions about the inter-connectedness of religion and culture and the interpretation of religious texts were raised and there was critical engagement with aspects of community life, including the place of women. The research identifies the need for a more informed critique of and engagement with the presuppositions that underpin discourse on minority communities. The teachers recognised the need for the whole school staff to undergo the same process and understood that this would be a long-term enterprise.

The conclusion is drawn that the interpretive approach can be applied to teachers' CPD and that it increases their understanding of and relationship with their communities, though some anticipated outcomes were not realised.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a practitioner research study conducted by a local authority inspector/adviser with responsibility for community cohesion, race equality and religious education in schools. It is set in one of the northern towns (it will be anonymised as 'Northtown' throughout this thesis) where riots took place in 2001 and where the minority ethnic population, mainly of Pakistani heritage, was just over 21% at the 2001 census. The school where the research was conducted, called 'School C',[1] serves a mainly Pakistani-heritage population. The research is focused on a continuing professional development programme (CPD), based on the interpretive approach (IA) to religious education (RE) developed at the University of Warwick, and was conducted in the humanities faculty of a mixed community secondary school during 2007, with final plenary sessions at the beginning of 2008. Its aim was to evaluate the transferability of the IA to teachers' CPD and to see how far it impacted on them and their understanding of and relationship with the communities from which their pupils came. It is hoped that the findings of this research will be of interest, not only to fellow researchers but also to those engaged in similar work in a variety of contexts, including those who support teachers' CPD.

This introductory chapter sets out the background to the research study and to the CPD programme. It was conducted under the auspices of a European-wide initiative, known as the REDCo Project - 'Religion in

Education: A contribution to dialogue or a factor of conflict in transforming societies of European countries' - for which the IA forms the theoretical basis (Weisse, 2007, 17). There is therefore included here a summary of the IA which also sets out its relevance to this study. The CPD programme came under the auspices of Northtown's education service for which I worked and its part in the promotion of community cohesion locally is here contextualised. The final section in this introductory chapter describes the school, its situation and its identified needs providing sufficient detail to establish the context in which the research was conducted.

The second chapter gives an account of and justification for the research methodology that was deployed to evaluate whether or not the IA is transferable to teachers' CPD. Chapters 3 and 4 provide an account of the CPD programme which was conducted and presents the data that emerged from it, drawing on the wide range of 'voices' that emerged from the deployment of the IA and the teachers' engagement with it. A number of key themes are identified to which they returned frequently in their conversations with each other and with their informants. The data are then analysed in relation to the research questions: chapter 5 focuses on the first part of the research question on the teachers' understanding of their communities; chapter 6 on the two remaining research questions on reflexivity. In the final chapter, conclusions are drawn and further research recommended.

The context of the research study

Part of the context of this study that needs to be established is its timing, not least in relation to community cohesion as a dominant political theme throughout the decade. The origins of 'community cohesion' as a part of British public discourse can be traced to a range of events and publications that coincided in 2001: the Ouseley report on Bradford's 'parallel lives'; the riots that took place in several northern towns which resulted in two major reports on community cohesion: one by an independent review team chaired by Ted Cantle (2001) and another by a ministerial group chaired by John Denholm (Home Office, 2001); and the terrorist attacks in America in September of that year. In the northern towns where the riots had occurred these events had particular resonance and it is in one of those towns that this research was conducted.

There followed a wide range of other publications and initiatives (e.g. Home Office 2003; Community Cohesion Panel, 2004; DCLG 2006; Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007a and b). Further terrorist attacks in London in 2005 added greater urgency to the perceived need to promote community cohesion and there was an increasing tendency to conflate community cohesion with preventing violent extremism, particularly by government (e.g. CLG 2007b). In relation to schools, it had been decided that Ofsted would inspect schools from 2008 on their promotion of community cohesion and guidance on this was published in the year that this study was conducted (DCSF, 2007).[2]

There was thus, nationally, political concern about community cohesion and this was paralleled in the life and work of Northtown. The local authority (LA) had a firm commitment to community cohesion and the education service was one of the leading agencies for this. In 2005 it had developed its community cohesion strategy, setting out both the vision and the means by which it could be strengthened in educational contexts. School C, where the staff had considerable experience of working with minority ethnic pupils but professional anxieties about their effectiveness, was an ideal setting to test aspects of the strategy and to site the REDCo Project, not least because the school was seeking humanities specialist status for which it was required to develop a community policy.

There are three separate but interlinked bases to this study:

- The European-wide research project - REDCo - in which Northtown's education service had agree to participate
- The education service's community cohesion strategy for which I was responsible
- The 'community' theme within the school's bid to achieve specialist humanities status.

The REDCo Project

The REDCo Project is a European-wide research project which takes the interpretive approach as its theoretical and pedagogical basis (Jackson 2008a, 317; Weisse, 2007, 17). That this project was established is no

surprise since community cohesion had been identified as an important priority in Europe (e.g. Council of Europe 2008; OSCE 2007; United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, 2009), as well as in Britain. The four themes within its title of religion, education, dialogue and conflict are entirely congruent with the work being undertaken in Northtown. The REDCo Project was an opportunity to deepen that work and extend our thinking and therefore the education service accepted the invitation to participate. Involvement in the REDCo Project meant that this research could be seen within a wider context, both geographically and theoretically, with opportunities for analysis and comparison at a range of levels. There was a further specific benefit in that School C also participated in separate but linked REDCo qualitative research on pupil attitudes to religion and religious education (Ipgrave and McKenna, 2008)[3]. The results from that research project provided me with valuable insights into the students of the school and the questionnaire (see Appendix 2) used by the European qualitative researchers became a research tool that could be amended for use with the staff.

The interpretive approach

The REDCo Project takes as its theoretical foundation the interpretive approach (IA) to religious education developed by Robert Jackson (1997, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008a) of the University of Warwick. It is interesting that the IA arose, at least in part, from ethnographic research on the transmission of religious culture to children in which he and colleagues were engaged (e.g. Jackson and Nesbitt, 1993) though he does, however, insist that ethnographic methods are not inextricably

bound up with the interpretive approach (2000, 131). His research led to concern about methodological issues that were relevant to both the study of religions and to religious education and included a critique of the ways in which religions are often portrayed, neglecting, for example, their inner diversity (Jackson, 2000, 130). He has always been adamant that the IA is only one contribution – theoretical, methodological and pedagogical - to RE and that it is complementary to some others (2008a, 309). Jackson describes his IA as 'essentially hermeneutical and post-phenomenological' (2008b, 191) and it questions some of the assumptions which had underpinned phenomenology: universal 'essences' or 'ideal types' *(eideia)* that could be understood intuitively are rejected; the bracketing out of one's own presuppositions (*epoche*) is replaced with open engagement in a process of moving from one's own view to that of others in a process he calls 'oscillating' (2000, 134); and the **use** of empathy is replaced with empathy as an **outcome** of understanding. Context has to be acknowledged, there is no autonomous realm of religious meaning (1997, 23) and one cannot assume that what is meant in one context is the same as its meaning in another. Here Jackson is drawing on Wittgenstein and Ryle and avoidance of a 'category mistake' (ibid). This is why the 'grammar' of discourse has to be understood (24). The IA brings together ethnographic approaches from cultural anthropology with hermeneutics (2008b, 192) and it is influenced by the work of a number of key disciplines and writers. He draws on Geertz's work in interpretive anthropology and from Ricoeur on hermeneutics, and creates a model for both the interpretation of religions and a pedagogy of religious education (2008b, 192).

Another significant influence on Jackson was Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1978) and his use of 'faith' and 'tradition' to provide means of understanding 'religion'. He extends Smith's model to include the 'group', the 'powerful influence' which he says Smith ignores (1997, 64).The IA is thus an exploration of the individual (of faith) within the group (a denomination, for example) as part of the 'tradition', enabling an understanding of 'parts' and 'wholes' and the relationship between them. Although Jackson shows that 'religion' is a modern, western construction (1997), he does not reject the notion of tradition as a whole nor does he reject the use of the word 'religion' (as Smith does); instead he offers the IA as a means of understanding 'the inner diversity, fuzzy edgedness and contested nature of religious traditions' (Jackson, 2005, 8).

There are three key concepts within the IA - representation, interpretation and reflexivity - and they can be applied to religions and to cultures and the relationship between them (133; 2008b, 193). In practice, the dividing lines between representation, interpretation and reflexivity are, like the religions and cultures under study, somewhat imprecise (Ipgrave and Jackson, 2009, 162).

In relation to representation, the IA rejects the notion of religions as reified with essences that can be defined. Rather the contested, complex and changing nature of religions is stated, along with their inner diversity. Jackson says that the IA is an 'epistemologically open'

approach to religion and that it is not 'relativistic with regard to truth' recognising that there are competing truth claims (1997, 126; 2000, 133; 2007, 182). It does not fall into a paradigm that all knowledge is socially constructed, although it recognises that it is true of some. Epistemological openness is different from a relativist view that religions are equally true and it does not deny the possibility of ultimate truth (1997, 126). The IA distinguishes 'issues of truth from those of meaning' (2008b, 193). This links to 'religion as cultural fact' (Jackson 2007b, 37), the stance adopted as a procedural strategy by the Council of Europe, which provided the funding for the REDCo Project. Despite the wide variations across the European continent on public education and religion, this view was uncontested: knowledge and understanding of religions are socially and political relevant.

The second concept, interpretation, has some links with Waardenburg's 'new style' phenomenology, the description and attempted classification of phenomena which enable comparison, and therefore the drawing out of meaning (Jackson 1997; 2000). More significantly, there are links with interpretive anthropology in which the learner oscillates between the concepts and experiences of the learner and the 'insider' in order to develop understanding. In this he draws on Clifford Geertz's use of 'experience near' and 'experience distant' concepts to enable interpretation (1997, 111). Another influence is Ricoeur's 'participation' and 'distanciation', a complementary process which would be built into this study as teachers engaged in participant observation and engaged with the questions and issues that arose for them (129).

Reflexivity, the final key concept of the interpretive approach, is about the learner's relationship with what is being studied. Jackson identifies three strands:

- edification which is re-assessing the participant's own way of life through new understanding (Jackson 1997, 131; 2000, 135);

- a constructive critique of what is being studied: this approach is not about promoting an undiscerning acceptance but is one that requires critical engagement (2000, 134);

- a critique of the interpretive process (ibid).

The first of these is supported by other writers, including Grimmitt (1987) though Jackson argues that his approach is similar to but different from Grimmitt's widely used 'learning from religion'. The potential transformative power of religious education (an important concept in the REDCo Project) is present through the raising of complex questions of belief and values (O'Grady, 2009, 20).

Jackson is also emphatic that the IA can have any starting point on the hermeneutic circle in the exploration of religion as tradition, as group, as individual and their interconnectedness; or it can take as its starting point the questions and concerns of the students themselves (2000, 142). The processes of dialogue and reflection are fundamental to the IA and its deployment.

Involvement in this project gave me the opportunity to take the IA and see if it could be applied to teachers and their continuing professional development. How this was done is set out in this study and in a chapter in the book that resulted from the British REDCo Project (Miller, 2009). It is important to note at this point that there is congruence between the community cohesion strategy we had developed in Northtown and the REDCo Project. The latter has the IA as its theoretical basis and the former was strongly influenced by it. Engagement with individuals in the context of the groups as part of a larger tradition and the use of ethnographic methods in an open and respectful process of dialogue and learning were key elements of the community cohesion strategy we had developed two years earlier in Northtown. My previous research degree (Miller, 1992) was an ethnographic study of a religious community and the methodology employed there influenced the development of policy and practice in our work to promote cohesion and respect for diversity. As Nesbitt says:

> Insights from ethnographic studies of faith communities… are
> relevant to education practice. As such they need to be
> included in… continuing professional development '(2005, 20).

Northtown's community cohesion strategy for education

The second contextual basis of this research study lay in my professional work as lead officer on community cohesion and in particular, the strategy (see appendix 1) through which officers could support schools in their promotion of community cohesion.[4] The strategy we developed was

based on the Local Government Association's definition of a cohesive community as one that has four key characteristics:

- there is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities

- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued

- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities

- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods (LGA, 2002).

A number of key concepts underpinned our cohesion strategy: identity (ies) and community (ies) were the major concepts and we articulated an understanding of them as multiple, changing and multi-faceted. Other concepts were 'dialogue and participation' as the means whereby community cohesion could be promoted. These two processes seemed to us to be the basis of engagement between educationists and the communities they serve. The final key concept was a phrase we borrowed from Roger Ballard - 'skilled cultural navigators' (1994) - and then adapted to our own purpose though it may have been more accurate to use the phrase 'skilled **inter-**cultural navigators'. It was our aim that:

> Everyone involved in education will have the confidence to become 'skilled cultural navigators', aware of their own identities and communities, and willing to engage with

> openness and empathy with the identity (ies) and community
> (ies) of others.   (Appendix 1, 2-3)

To develop the strategy we took each of the LGA's four characteristics and set out a 'vision' of what it would look like in an educational setting and then we identified ways in which it might be achieved. This research study has this strategy as one of its foundations. I wanted to see if the community cohesion strategy could work within a school setting, if the key processes of dialogue and participation would impact positively on staff, enabling them to develop a more cohesive school community, to engage more confidently with the communities their school serves and to develop their own understanding and reflection.[5] One further aspect of the community cohesion strategy that is worth mentioning here is the recognition that there was a need for 'safe space' in which dialogue to promote understanding could take place. Ipgrave made the case for a 'safe forum' (2005, 39) in her work on dialogical approaches to RE and it is echoed in The *Curriculum Review Diversity and Citizenship* report chaired by Sir Keith Ajegbo:

> Teachers and pupils need room to be able to explore their
> own histories and uncertainties within a safe environment,
> where debate can develop and their expertise grow (DfES
> 2007, 35).

Reasons for choosing this school

The third contextual basis of this study is the school where the research was carried out and its perceived needs, as identified by the school

management team. When considering which of a possible 28 Northtown secondary schools to invite to participate in the REDCo Project a number of factors were considered. First, I wanted a school where I could rely on the co-operation of the staff and, ideally, have already worked with some of the senior and middle managers. Second, I wanted a school with a significant number of minority ethnic students, not because community cohesion is only about ethnicity or because it should not be a priority in all-white schools. Rather, I wanted staff to have a professional incentive to participate in exploring religions and communities and to be able to assess the relevance of what they had done in the light of their day-to-day work. Thirdly and significantly, I also wanted a school where religious education is taken seriously and taught well. This school has had, over the seven years I have analysed Northtown's examination results, consistently high positive residuals for their Religious Studies (RS) full course GCSE.[6] In 2007, 44% of students gained five A*-C grades at GCSE level.[7] The results in RS were significantly higher: 72% achieved A*-C grades in full course GCSE, taken by 53% of the cohort (with another 20% doing short course). This constitutes what the school rightly describes in its Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) as 'excellent performance' and the results are 0.75 of a grade higher than predicted by Yellis (that is, what students are expected to achieve given their previous performance). I had already carried out a small research study in 2005 in this school, and others, on why RS/RE results were higher than other comparable subjects (Miller, 2006).

For these reasons, the school was approached and the newly appointed head teacher agreed to participate. It must be recognised, however, that the school faced considerable challenges which made demands on staff time and energy. In 2007 it was judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory, with some aspects of the school's work being praised. Their SEF says that their examination results mean that 'we are making the same amount of progress as the top 25% of schools nationally'. It also points out that there is little difference between the performance of white and Pakistani students, and between students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and first language students. Nonetheless, the school's overall performance is below the national average and in the last five years it has been in an Ofsted 'category' indicating its failure to provide an appropriate standard of education. In 2008 it was labelled as a 'national challenge school' by the DCSF because of its failure to achieve 30% five A*-C grades at GCSE level, including both English and Maths. This had serious negative consequences on the CPD programme, as we shall see.

The school's needs

The school's managers had two specific reasons for agreeing to participate in the project. The first lay in its bid to become a specialist status humanities school which it finally achieved in autumn 2007. Each specialist status bid has a community dimension and the school's strategic priorities included the need to build links with stakeholders and to enhance community participation. They had identified three groups within the community with which they wanted to develop better links:

Asian women, migrant workers and local senior citizens. They recognised that this research study could definitely help with the first and might contribute to the second and that participation would increase the likelihood of achieving the success in their bid which had, so far, eluded them.

Their second reason for agreeing is that the school is situated in a largely white middle class suburban area but its students do not come from the locality. According to the school's SEF, students live an average of three miles away from the school and the staff feel that relationships with their community (ies) suffer consequently: 'the community of the students is distant from the school in terms of distance and culture' (see Fig. 1).[8]

This is a significant statement by the school. The guidance issued by the Department of Children Schools and Families (DCSF) on promoting community cohesion (2007) offers a four-fold definition of 'community' including 'the community within which the school is located' (2007, 5) but this over-simplifies the complexity of demographics and school populations. In this instance the 'local community' is largely white while the school's population is largely Pakistani-heritage and the students live in very different social, economic and ethnic circumstances. Local white pupils go to schools further along the valley. The reason for this is often attributed to 'white flight' (e.g. Lynch writing in an appendix to the Cantle report, 2001, 70-1). Lynch quotes Kundnani who links this phenomenon with that of 'parental choice'[9] which has resulted in increasing segregation in schools (Lynch, 2001, 2). There are, however,

Figure 1. The school in relation to pupils' addresses by ethnicity

▫	ABAN
▫	AIND
▫	AMPK
▫	AOPK
▫	AOTH
▫	BAFR
▫	BCRB
▫	BOTH
▫	MOTH
▫	MWAS
▫	MWBA
▫	MWBC
▫	NOBT
▫	OOTH
▫	REFU
▫	WBRI
▫	WOTH
▫	WROM
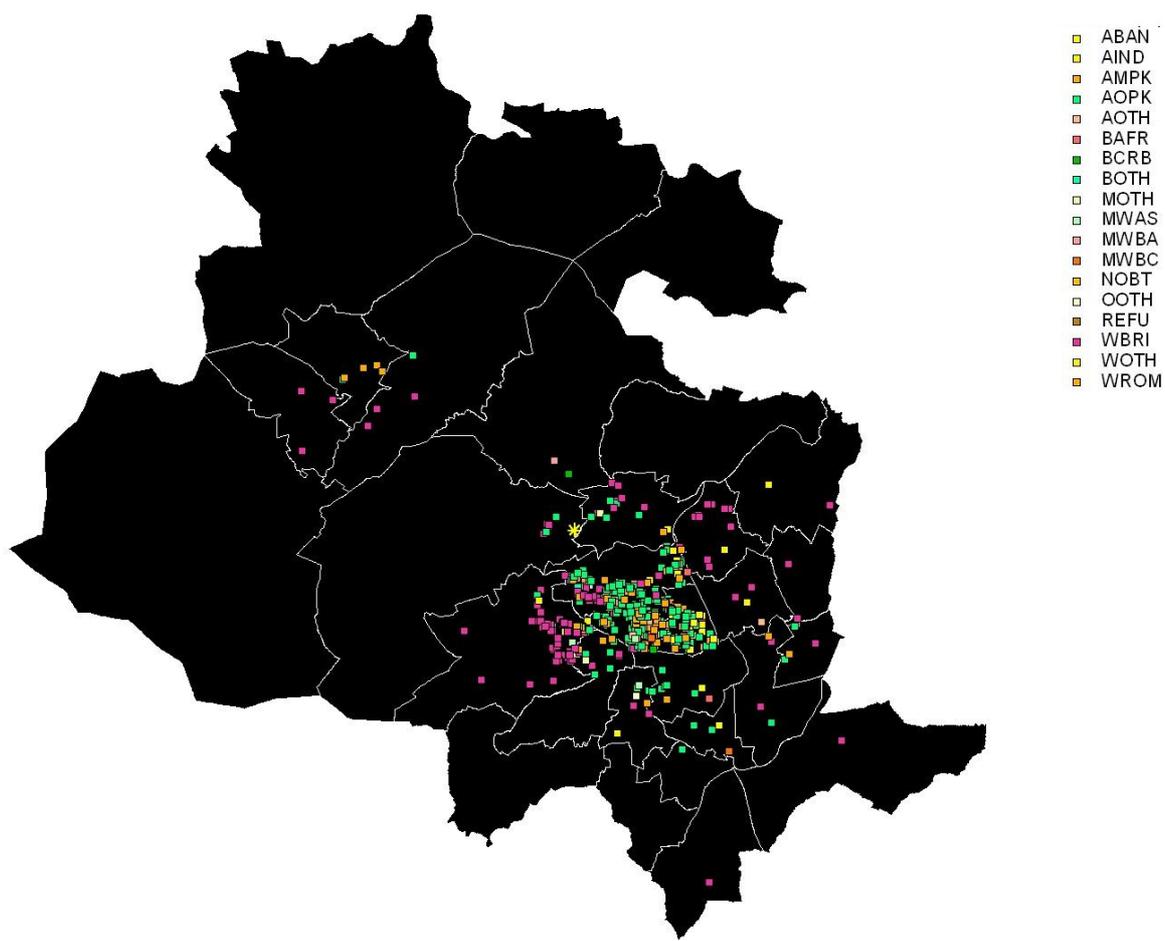
*Indicates school's location

alternative views. Yunis Alam, a local academic, describes the movement as 'middle class flight' suggesting that segregation is more closely linked to socio-economic factors (2006, 15) and indeed the local community is beginning to change as more affluent minority ethnic families move in. Ludi Simpson and Nisa Finney demonstrate that there are equal movements of Pakistani-heritage families out of the inner cities (as they settle and become more prosperous) as there are movements in of white people whom I take to be (though they do not say) European migrant workers (Finney and Simpson, 2009, 187). Nonetheless, School C's population is skewed in relation to its immediate locality and, like most schools in Northtown, it serves a largely mono-cultural population. These matters were referred to quite frequently during the CPD sessions, as in the following exchange between the head teacher and the deputy head of faculty:

HT   Lots of Muslim parents want their kids to go to the white school because they think they're better.

David   That's what happened here and now look at us - we're mainly Muslim. (Laughter)

There was a strong desire expressed by both the school's managers and its teachers that the 'distance' between the pupils' families and the school should be overcome and participation in this project was one of the ways in which they believed this could be achieved. It can be expressed in terms of 'social bridging', a term widely borrowed from Putnam (2000) in his work on 'social capital', defined by Communities and Local Government (CLG) as the 'social glue' that links communities.

Putnam identifies three categories: bonding, bridging and linking (CLG 2007a, 14; 2008, 26). A school's role falls within the second category of 'bridging' – forming connections between people who have overlapping interests and who may come from within different groups in a community. It was clear from both the school's documentation and conversations with staff that the enhancing of 'social capital' was high on their priority list and they wanted to 'bridge' the distance between them and their communities. They were willing to make the effort to meet the challenge articulated by Modood and Kastoryano (2006, 176):

> Do not parents have the right to expect that schools will make an effort … not to create a conflict between the work of the school and the upbringing of the children at home, but, rather, show respect for their religious background?

The wider local context

It is necessary now to place the school in its local context. Northtown has been the focus of considerable negative attention including two infamous 'affairs', one linked to a local head teacher whose comments stirred up controversy about minority ethnic pupils (1984-5) and the other to the burning of *The Satanic Verses* in 1989 (Bowen, 1992; Parekh, 1993, 2006). This has resulted in very negative perceptions generally of Northtown (e.g. Sardar, 2009, 119), alongside a focus on its Black and Minority Ethnic population (BME) which is largely from Mirpur, a district of Pakistani Kashmir. Several high-profile reports have been written on Northtown which focus on 'parallel lives' (Home Office, 2004) and prejudice and fear (Ouseley, 2001). There have been largely

unsubstantiated claims of segregation and ghetto-ization and populist publications have furthered this view. In a book that aroused significant local controversy, George Alagiah wrote 'I was entering a version of Kashmir… an Asian enclave… a kind of separate development' (2006, 157). A recent report from *Civitas* purports to provide evidence of jihadi activities in Muslim schools, including one of the most respected schools in Northtown (MacEoin, 2009). The publicity that surrounds the publication of such reports can be deeply damaging to public (and teachers') perceptions of Muslim communities in Britain. As Alam and Husband point out Northtown's Pakistani-heritage community is presented as 'fundamentally flawed' (2006, 17) and in need of reform, both of which assertions they reject.

There can be no doubt that these negative perceptions have an impact not only on how the school sees itself but how the young people growing up in Northtown see themselves and their communities, not least in the aftermath of the 2001 riots. Ethnicity and religion are seen as key factors in Northtown, as Alam and Husband point out:

> For the majority of British 'white' citizens', it is easy to see [Northtown] as an extreme demonstration of the social costs of allowing 'ethnic ghettos' to develop in our inner cities. And, for the majority population, the difference and wilful 'self-segregation' of this population are fundamentally linked to their religious faith – Islam.   (2006, 4)

But there are now challenges to these perceptions on several fronts. Challenge to the prevailing perception using quantitative data comes from Ludi Simpson who sets out to dispel what he calls 'myths', especially the notions of increasing segregation and ghetto-ization and he demonstrates statistically that many of these assumptions are deeply erroneous, including Trevor Phillips' assertion that we are 'sleepwalking into segregation'[10] (Finney and Simpson 2009). Challenge based on qualitative data comes from Alam and Husband's work gathered through interviews with British-Pakistani men in Northtown (Alam, 2006) from which they develop a socio-political critique (Alam and Husband, 2006). They reject the analyses of Cantle, Ouseley and others, arguing that within the Pakistani-heritage community there is huge strength, alluding back to Putnam (2000), in 'social bonding' which they see not as isolationist but rather a strong foundation on which participative citizenship can be based (Alam and Husband, 2006, 56). For them, social class and poverty are too often ignored in any analysis of Northtown's situation where ethnicity is invariably given primacy (55).

Social deprivation

There is a significant degree of social deprivation in the wards from which the school's students primarily come. 'NT'8 and 'NT'9, according to the schools' SEF, are ranked in the 20% most deprived areas in England and there are 'indicators of severe deprivation in many households in which our students live (see Fig 2).[11]

Figure 2: Pupil addresses in relation to areas of multiple deprivation, by ethnicity
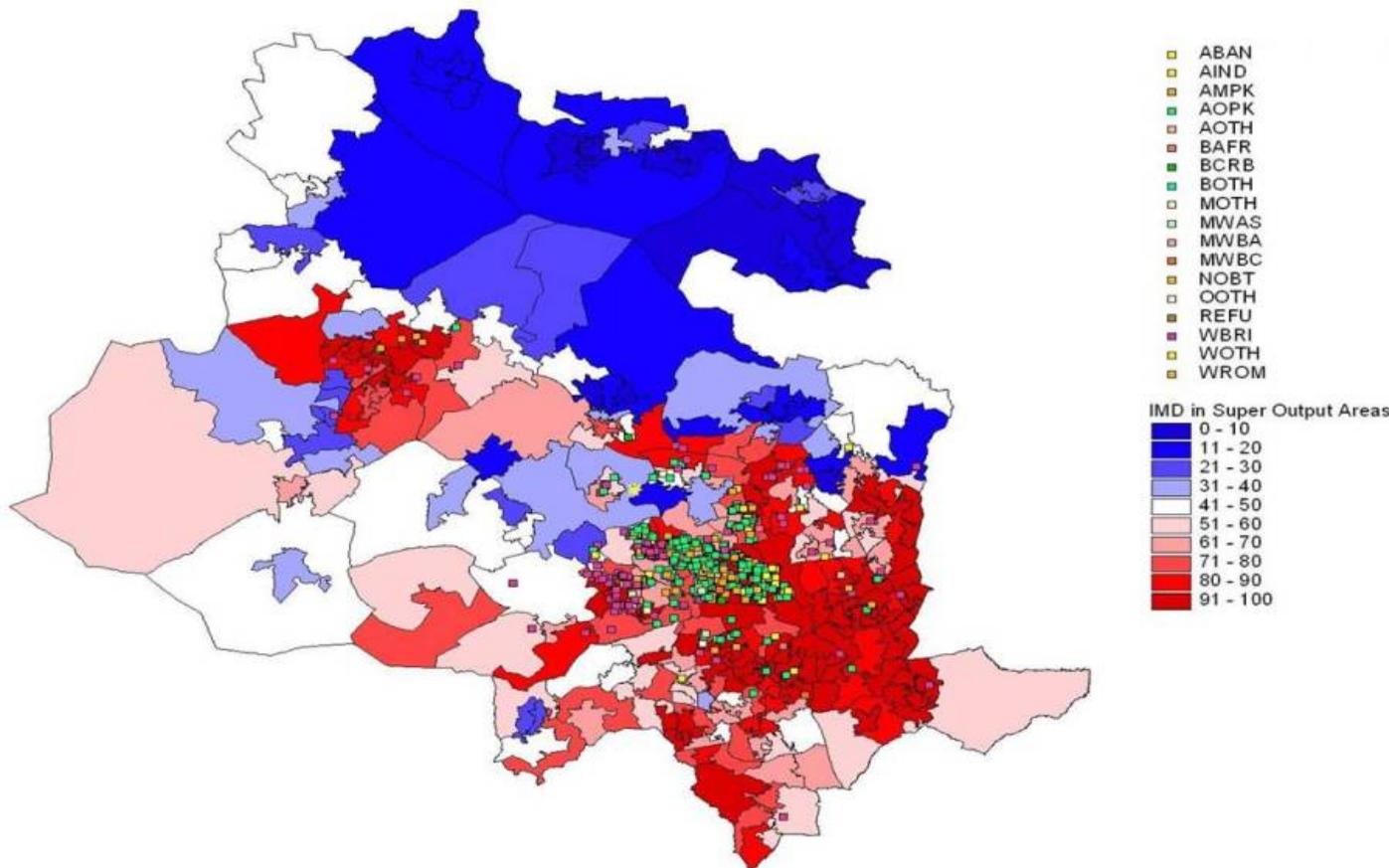
Lewis points out that 55% of Muslims in England live in areas containing the most deprived housing conditions and they form a 'growing underclass' (2007, 29) that impacts on negatively on community cohesion (e.g. CLG 2007a, 13). As one of Alam's respondents says tellingly, 'Us Pakistanis, we're compressed' (2006, 106).

The school's population

2005 figures from Northtown's local authority show that out of 28 secondary schools 20 had 85% or more of their population from one cultural/ethnic group (13 white and 7 Pakistani-heritage). There were no schools where fewer than 60% of pupils were from either of those groups. In other words, schools are not mixed. The Ouseley report stated that 'segregation in schools is one indicator' of the 'social fragmentation' that is occurring in Northtown (2001, 6). Bristol University research on ethnic segregation in schools says that Northtown is one of the areas showing 'extreme segregation indices' (Burgess and Wilson, 2003, 8).

In 2007 School C had 927 pupils, with an additional 136 in the sixth form. The proportion of boys to girls is high (58.3%) and slowly increasing; 76.5% of pupils are from a South Asian background with 71.4% of Pakistani heritage.[12] The school has spare capacity and admitted 91 students mid-year in 2007 who are mainly Pakistani and do not speak English. They fall into two groups: students who have been excluded from neighbouring schools and those who are newly arrived in Britain. The school's SEF says of these pupils:

> Some are scarred by their experience of war and are orphans. Many need to spend months learning English before they can join mainstream classes. Both groups require specialist and intensive support … we have many success stories not only of academic achievement by also personal achievement in the face of appalling odds.

The school was given 'outstanding' in its support of vulnerable pupils by Ofsted when it was judged to be only satisfactory overall.

The school's SEF says that 738 students do not have English as a first language **and** they are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The number of students with special education needs is 56.1% (17.6% nationally). The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is 37.5% (13.1 nationally).[13] In the school year from September 2006 around 24% of white students were excluded (8 boys and 14 girls) and around 12% of Pakistani students (64 boys and 13 girls). The school has anxieties about its poor white disaffected population. Thus, it can be seen that the school works in the challenging circumstances of what is sometimes called 'super-diversity'.[14]

Projects to promote community cohesion

It is important to note that this project stands within a strong tradition in the school to promote community cohesion and it is clear that the staff take this responsibility seriously. The school's SEF says that there is 'little evidence of inter-racial aggression or violence' and Ofsted agreed that it is a 'racially harmonious, inclusive community'. Throughout this project, the staff demonstrated what Sir Keith Ajegbo describes as 'the commitment of each school's head teacher and leadership team, to drive, morally and intellectually, the importance of education for diversity (DfES 2007, 25).

The school's SEF lists a number of ways in which it works with its community including:

- Regular visits into the school community e.g. mosques, community centres…

- Senior staff visits to Mirpur to promote community and cultural cohesion and foreground the humanitarian ethos of our school

- Liaison with community stakeholders though extended schools

- Discussion with Muslim scholars and elders during Nasiha launch has specific positive impact on community cohesion (see below)

- Whole school assemblies

- Student involvement in city wide projects such as 'In Your Shoes'.[15]

The SEF points out that the school is developing good links with the community it serves and gives the example of an information evening at a local community centre. What the SEF does not say is that this was very poorly attended. There was only one parent who turned up for the event and only three who came to a meeting on the Mirpur Connection, an initiative run in collaboration with the local university, amongst others, designed to foster links with Pakistan.[16]

One of the important community cohesion initiatives the school highlights in its SEF is the *Nasiha project.*[17] This is worth describing in some detail because it has attained a high national profile and is included in the Yorkshire and Humber government office's summary of projects to reduce violent extremism (Wheeler, 2008). The school engaged in a trial of this in 2007 with year 10 students, alongside a trial in some of

Northtown's mosques where it was taught by imams. Described as a citizenship programme, it was produced by a science teacher at School C for the local Council for Mosques. Lessons include such topics as 'Oath of Peace', 'Sacredness of Life', 'Being a Good Student' and 'Islam and Suicide Bombings' and there is a strong emphasis on civil participation and democracy. The teaching methods deployed are a hybrid of *madrasa* and maintained school approaches. The *Nasiha* project was launched by Ruth Kelly, then secretary of state at the CLG, at the school. It provides evidence that the school is already trying hard to work with its local community and participation in the REDCo Project is another attempt to do this.

Conclusion

This, then, is the background to the research study based on the interpretive approach which applies its principles to the continuing professional development of teachers in the humanities faculty of a maintained mixed comprehensive school in a local authority in the north of England.

The three bases of the study have been set out: the European-wide REDCo Project with its theoretical basis in the interpretive approach, the local authority's community cohesion strategy and the school's need to improve its understanding of and relationship with its local communities. It is necessary to point out at this stage that the three bases to the study make for complexity. My agenda as a researcher within the REDCo Project and the teachers' agendas were different. I was researching the

transferability of the interpretive approach whilst they were setting out to improve their relationships with their local communities. These different agendas were not in tension in the activities we engaged in together but they made the structuring and writing of the study more complex.

The context of the study has been set out in relation to the school and the community which it serves, within the wider community of Northtown where it is situated. Some detail has been given about Northtown which has faced considerable notoriety about its community relations, particularly with regard to its main minority group, Pakistani-heritage people from the district of Mirpur. Negative perceptions about Northtown have been challenged but it is also recognised that they impact on the school and its students and they form part of the background in which this research was conducted.

In the next chapter, I set out an account of and justification for the research methods used to gather data in this evaluation of the transferability of the interpretive approach to teachers' continuing professional development. Grimmitt (2000, 22) pointed out that it was 'remarkable' that there had been no independent evaluations of any of the main pedagogies of religious education. This study will not provide that but it will provide an evaluation of its transferability and effectiveness in the context of adult education, sometimes referred to as andragogy (Knowles).[18]

End-notes

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[1] This is the name given to this school in another linked but separate REDCo study on teenagers' views on religion (Bertram-Troost *et al.,* 2008).

[2] One of my specialist studies forms part of the theoretical background to this thesis and provides a critical overview of the development of community cohesion in policy and practice since 2001, particularly in relation to Northtown.

[3] The school in which I conducted my research is School C in this chapter.

[4] An anonymised version is appended to prevent identification of the LA (See appendix 1).

[5] This resonates with some of the guidance in the DCSF's toolkit for schools on preventing violent extremism where strengthening links with communities is affirmed (2008, 8).

[6] Positive residuals provide a comparison between students' attainment in one subject and the rest of their results.

[7] Their target for five A*-C grades at GCSE in 2007 was 37% whereas the actual figure was 44%. This was the school's highest ever A*-C score and exceeded the Fischer Family Trust predictions[7].

[8] Fig 1. The school's population, by ethnicity and residence. Pakistani-heritage pupils are shown in green. A yellow star shows the school's location. The map shows all 29 wards of Northtown Metropolitan District.

[9] The correct term is in fact 'parental preference'.

[10] Made in a speech in September 2005.

[11] Fig. 2. The school's population, by ethnicity and residence, in relation to indices of multiple deprivation in Northtown. Pakistani-heritage pupils are shown in green. A yellow star shows the school's location.

[12] According to the draft document published by Ofsted in its consultation on the duty to promote community cohesion there are 63 secondary schools that have more 50% of BME pupils, of which this school is one.

[13] These figures are from Ofsted data, 2006.

[14] See, for example, Finney and Simpson (2009, 12-3).

[15] 'In Your Shoes' aimed to promote enterprise and understanding of diversity and was set up by a local Business and Enterprise College. Year 7 students from six local secondary schools, including School C, and two schools in Pakistan all accepted the challenge to explain to others what it is like to stand in their shoes through film, design and writing. They met each other and, where possible, visited each other's schools.

[16] See: http://www.brad.ac.uk/admin/pr/pressreleases/2007/mirpur.php

[17] www.nasiha.co.uk

[18] http://tip.psychology.org/knowles.html

Chapter 2

Research methodology

This research study was carried out under the auspices of the REDCo Project, a European Commission Framework 6 Project involving nine European universities (Jackson *et al.,* 2007). Part of the English contribution was a series of action or practitioner research studies undertaken within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), based at the University of Warwick in which this researcher, along with others, applied the interpretive approach (IA) to a range of learning situations (Jackson, 2008a; Ipgrave, Jackson and O'Grady, 2009). My study was the only one undertaken with serving teachers and it was necessary to identify research methods that were appropriate for the topic without being unnecessarily intrusive on the teachers' experience of what was, for them, a continuing professional development (CPD) programme. I was researching the IA while they were interested in how the community aspect of their bid to become a specialist status school could be made successful and how they could improve their relationship with and understanding of their local communities. This entailed a degree of compromise, particularly in the construction of the programme and the activities the teachers would undertake. To give an example of what this meant in practice: the school had identified 'Asian women' as one focus of its bid so we included a visit to a women's community centre for one group and a conversation with a Muslim woman for all participants.

These were not intrinsic to the research question but nor were they completely tangential.

Community of Practice

The 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998) set up by the English researchers at Warwick involved in the REDCo Project provided both support and challenge and it linked each of the participants to each other's research all of which was based within the same theoretical framework (Jackson, 2008a, 319).There was too a common epistemological stance, congruent with the areas under study and the methods employed, where knowledge evolved from 'practice, reflection and conversation' (O'Grady, 2009, 39). The Warwick group met all three of Wenger's dimensions of a community of practice. We were: engaged in a 'joint enterprise'; bound together as a social entity by 'mutual engagement'; had a 'shared repertoire' developed over time, including our theoretical basis in the interpretive approach and vocabulary (Wenger, 1998, 2). We met four out of five of Altrichter's reasons for setting up a community of practice: we 'talked about plans, steps and results'; we engaged in the 'dissemination of teacher knowledge'; we collaborated as 'critical friends' in a collegial group; and we became a 'critical forum for research' (Altrichter, 2005, 13). The one criterion we did not fully meet was to practise research methods on each other. Altrichter emphasises the importance of the 'professional community' as part of a social process rather than an individual pursuit and that was important in our community of practice which extended over three years and enabled personal and professional relationships to develop.

The community of practice group took the interpretive approach (IA) and applied it to a number of research contexts, partly to test it and partly to develop it. One of the intentions was to gain a set of well-documented descriptions of the approach in practice (Jackson and O'Grady, 2007, 197).

A practitioner research approach

The term 'practitioner' rather than 'action' research seems more appropriate to this study for several reasons. First, there is no iterative element in this research, one of the key identifiers of action research (Altrichter, 1993, 49). It had been planned that there would be at least two CPD programmes conducted with two different faculties, both of which would be evaluated in the research study. However, after the first programme was completed, the head teacher asked that there should be a delay in starting the second but then declined to participate further, on the grounds of staff time.[1] Second, the research is not about defining a problem and testing action strategies (44), which Altrichter (2005) and O'Grady (2007) identify as central to action research where it is primarily designed to develop teaching strategies and improve professional practice (e.g. O'Dell, 2009). There was some element of 'testing' in my study in that aspects of the community cohesion strategy we had developed within the education service of Northtown formed part of the contextual basis for the project, but the strategy was not being formally tested with a view to its being amended accordingly. Nor was I setting out to test my competence or improve my practice as a trainer (Ipgrave

and O'Grady, 2009, 167). A third reason is that 'practitioner' is a broad term and applicable to professionals other than teachers (Dadds, n.d.) and this helped differentiate my part in the community of practice from the other studies, all of which were situated in either schools or universities and conducted by 'teachers as researchers' in 'practical action research' (Cohen *et al.,* 2007, 302).The distinction between practitioner and action research is, nonetheless, somewhat blurred.

A qualitative research study

An early decision was taken that this study would rely on qualitative data, partly because the size of the group involved is small, comprising only 11 teachers from which no statistically valid data could be drawn. Given that the IA is formulated from the joint bases of social anthropology and hermeneutics, it would appear self-evident that an interpretive research methodology would be employed in any study that was seeking to evaluate its effectiveness in practice. This research is predicated on a view of religions and cultures as constructed, changing and internally diverse. It is focussing on teachers who are trying to understand and interact with their communities and their members' constructions of their communities, identities, practices and beliefs. There is here a double hermeneutic because what I am investigating is how teachers relate to and make meaning from their encounters with members of religious and cultural communities while the teachers are making meaning of those encounters. As Ipgrave points out this led to some 'blurring of the boundaries between the objects and the processes of research' (Ipgrave and O'Grady, 2009, 161) and added to the

complexity of this study though as she also points out that this means that I am 'more closely attuned to [the teachers'] experiences of the project' (ibid).

To understand meaning requires careful, detailed investigation of thoughts, responses, perceptions and experiences, the epistemological basis of which is anti-positivist and constructivist. A naturalistic and interpretive methodology (Cohen *et al.,* 2007, 5) based on qualitative data, gathered in a number of ways, is the means by which this can be achieved. Research, as Jackson says, is about 'human beings relating to other human beings as well as about formulating and testing hypotheses' (2001,188).

I recognise that other researchers have adopted different methodologies whilst investigating related areas. For example, Smith (2007) adopts a quantitative approach in his study of 3,418 young people and the influence of religions on their behaviour and attitudes. While there are benefits in having statistically valid data, I found his study frustrating because it gave little insight into what the young people thought or why. For example, he found that 60% of South Asian British youngsters felt that their lives had purpose compared with 54% of White British youngsters. He then writes: 'This **may** be due to a stronger sense of community…; or it **may** be a result of the fact that they live in families who have made conscious decisions to migrate…; or it **may** be due to their religious or political beliefs' [my emphases] (2007, 26). In other words, he does not know and the voices of the young people are not

heard at all, only their tick-box answers to his questions. In my study, the teachers were going to listen to the voices of members of communities and I was going to listen to the teachers' voices, as they grappled with interpreting those communities and reflected on the impact on them, both professionally and personally, in the process the interpretive approach terms reflexivity.

The research question

The basis of the research question lies within the three principal concepts of the interpretive approach, applied to teachers' CPD within the context of the REDCo project. These three are representation, interpretation and reflexivity which sit alongside the REDCo concepts of religion, education, dialogue, conflict and transformation.

The following research question was formulated:

> What is the impact of the deployment of the interpretive approach in the continuing professional development of the humanities faculty teachers'
>
>> 1. Understanding of the school's religious and cultural communities
>> 2. Personal edification
>> 3. Professional practice?

This question is drawn from the interpretive approach, the purpose of which is to enable an understanding of communities, both religious and cultural, through engagement with individual practitioners and their group within the wider tradition in which they are located. The purpose

of ensuring that religions and cultures are appropriately represented is to enable an informed understanding of them. The first part of the research question was therefore to see if this happened as a consequence of deploying the first two principles, representation and interpretation, of the IA. Jackson also insists that the study results in edification, part of the key concept that he terms 'reflexivity (1997, 131; 2000, 135). The second part of the question therefore asks if such personal edification took place and, because this was about teachers and their professional development, a third element was also necessary. The evidence gathered from the three parts of this research question would enable a conclusion to be drawn on whether or not the IA could be successfully transferred to teachers' CPD.

Gathering data: data sets

In order to gather data on the teachers' responses to the experiences they undertook as part of this evaluation of the transferability of the interpretive approach, it was necessary to deploy research methods that gather detailed qualitative data that would give an accurate representation of the teachers' understanding and edification. This included their attempts to grapple with some complex and difficult questions and to explore questions of meaning and interpretation. It was essential that such data were gathered in a sensitive, respectful manner and in a number of ways, to enable these levels of complexity to be expressed and recorded. The research methods chosen within the qualitative paradigm are taken from ethnographic research: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, written submissions (in a

variety of forms) and relevant published documentation (Burgess, 1984; Cohen *et al.,* 2007*;* Cheetham, 2001; Nesbitt, 2001).

The first research method was participant observation and the taking of detailed fieldnotes in the many contexts in which we worked: the school library for preparatory meetings; the off-site resource centre; during the semi-structured interviews with the sixth form students; the places of worship and the community centres. These fieldnotes were sometimes written during the CPD sessions (such as while participants were interviewing the students) or they were written up as soon as possible afterwards (such as the CPD sessions which I was leading).[2] Detailed fieldnotes, including my observations, comments, questions and cross-references as well as notes on the participants and their informants and what took place, form what Geertz calls 'thick description' (quoted by Cohen *et al.,* 2007, 169).

These fieldnotes were complemented by the flip charts the teachers produced throughout the CPD sessions: their initial understandings of identity and community; their knowledge and perceptions of the groups identified in the specialist status bid; their existing knowledge of the place of worship they were to visit; the questions and issues they wanted to raise; as well as the notes from their plenary sessions at the end of each of the three CPD days.

These two sets of data, along with my planning notes and agendas for the sessions, led to the identification of the main themes that arose from

the teachers' engagement with the communities and community leaders they met. This has its basis in Glaser and Strauss (1967) and their 'grounded theory' approach in which, through reading and re-reading the data, the key themes emerge and are not superimposed by the researcher. These themes then helped determine the questions asked during semi-structured interviews with three members of staff that were conducted early the following term, as a form of triangulation or 'respondent validation' (O'Grady, 2007, 124). I checked that they agreed that these were the main themes and that they had nothing further to add. The following themes were identified:

- Identity

- British/Pakistani?

- Differentiating between religion and culture

- Interpretation of the Qur'an

- The place of women within Islam

- 'Diversity within diversity'

- Division within community/ies

- Division between communities

- Religion as the focus for racism.

- 9/11

- School as a centre for and within the community.

After further reading of the data, they were further grouped into categories to enable concise and coherent reporting and these are set out in chapters 3 and 4. Only to report on or through Jackson's or REDCO's pre-determined key themes would carry the danger of

misrepresenting the teachers' own presuppositions, responses, values and attitudes and would be both restrictive and unethical. It was important that the teachers' voices should not only be heard but that they, at least in part, should determine the way in which the data they generated are presented.

The teachers' accounts

There were three other sets of written data gathered from the teachers: reflective diaries and two sets of questionnaires which were analysed for further evidence on the key themes that had arisen and to see if there were any others to be added. First, in September 2007 as the main part of the CPD sessions were getting underway, four teachers agreed to keep a reflective diary (RD) throughout the rest of the project. I suggested that it would be appropriate to have both men and women; managers and main scale staff; experienced and less experienced staff. I gave the teachers relatively little guidance saying only that I wanted them to feel free to note anything that was of interest or significance to them and to record their own responses and feelings about the various tasks we were undertaking. Three were written in school note books and comprised between 18 sides from a part-time female teacher (RD 3) and four sides from the head of faculty (RD 1), who wrote his retrospectively, despite my request that they should be kept up-to-date. The youngest member of the team kept hers electronically (RD 4). I was aware, as Nesbitt points out, that these were not 'spontaneous diaries' (2001, 148) but they were an attempt to give an open-ended opportunity to the teachers to record their impressions of the process

and their findings. The data in these diaries were used in two main ways: to check the accuracy and validity of my fieldnotes and to enable an analysis of the data through the key themes of interpretation and reflexivity (this is written up in chapters 5 and 6). This proved to be a more difficult task than the analysis of the questionnaires that the staff had also completed for the obvious reason that the teachers were free to write whatever they chose in their diaries whereas the questionnaires were constructed to elicit specific evidence. When writing in their diaries, teachers moved (often within the same paragraph) through and around issues of representation, interpretation and reflexivity and it was difficult to extract and separate out the three strands of the IA but the three are closely interrelated anyway (Ipgrave and O'Grady, 2009, 172). The level of honesty in the teachers' diaries was noticeable and, although difficult to quantify precisely, I felt that some of the diaries gave quite an openly critical view of their experiences. They were thus a rich source of data and are widely quoted in this study.

Staff also completed two questionnaires. The first (see appendix 2) had two purposes in terms of this research study and it was based on the questionnaire that had been completed by their students as part of a linked REDCo study (Ipgrave and McKenna, 2008).[3] It gave me the opportunity to collect basic information about each member of staff including gender, age, teaching status and self-ascription in terms of religious membership and nationality. I deleted or combined some questions, amended some to take account of the teachers' age and experience. For example, I changed 'Do you think that people from

different religions can **live together**?' to **'live in the same community',** because 'living together' has particular connotations for adults.[4] This questionnaire also enabled me to gather from the staff some of their views on religion and on religion in education which were used for the analysis of the data under the headings of 'interpretation' and 'reflexivity' (see chapters 5 and 6).

A second questionnaire, or summary form, was completed by (nine of the eleven) staff after each of the CPD days (see appendix 3). Its purpose was to gather more detailed data on what the teachers had gained in developing their understanding of the religious and cultural communities they had visited and the impact it had made on them (so far) professionally and personally. In order to construct this summary form, I primarily used the questions defined by Robert Jackson (2007a; 2008a, 317-9), using the three key concepts of the IA, along with the key concepts of the REDCo Project. Again these answers were used primarily to enable an analysis of the data under the headings of 'interpretation' and 'reflexivity' and these are presented in chapters 5 and 6.

The teachers were asked 14 questions which began with the opportunity for them to set out what they had learned during the CPD day about 'religions' and 'communities' that was new or different. Their answers would provide me with substantiating evidence to compare with what they had said they knew at the beginning of the day as well as providing corroboration (or falsification) of my fieldnotes. These two questions

were phrased in an open and straightforward manner, not least to motivate the teachers to answer fully and to continue with the more complex and demanding questions which followed.

The second set of questions, of which there were three, moved to interpretation and were taken directly from Jackson (2007a): their understanding of key terms and concepts; the relationship between the individuals they had met, the group and the tradition as a whole to which they belonged; their ability to empathise with their informants, notwithstanding the difficulties of the word 'empathy' (Jackson, 1997, 46). Having given the teachers the opportunity to articulate their interpretation of their experiences, the next questions asked about representation. Had we avoided stereotyping and misrepresentation? Had we given sufficient attention to diversity within religions/ communities? These questions were partly about finding out whether the experiences that had been planned to be congruent with the IA were seen in the same way by the teachers. They were also there to reinforce the importance of diversity and the avoiding of stereotyping in relation to their roles as teachers in a multi-cultural school.

The final questions were on the theme of reflexivity, and its subset of edification (Jackson 2006, 402-3). As set out in the research question, the third part of the IA in this research is being understood in two ways: reflexivity in relation to the teachers' professional understanding and expertise, and their personal edification (Jackson, 1997) a term which he borrows from Rorty and which refers more to personal transformation

(and which links these questions directly to the concepts used in the REDCo Project).

First, teachers were asked if they had shared or common experience with the people they had met, then they were asked if they had found anything that was different and which had caused them to reflect. This Jackson describes as oscillating between their own experience and that of others in the process of reflection (1997, 130). Second, the teachers were asked what impact (if any) there might be on their professional work with a request to list what they were. This was an attempt to move beyond a quick affirmation of the experience, to more specific indications of its impact. Returning to one of the stated concepts of the REDCo Project, there was then an opportunity for the teachers to identify anything which had caused them conflict or discomfort. The third and final question asked if there was anything else they wanted to add. The data from these questionnaires provide another layer of evidence to enable a detailed and substantiated analysis.

The responses from staff were collated under each of the interpretive approach headings and then classified within each set of answers, according to subject. Perhaps inevitably, the answers did not always fit the questions and these too were noted and included. A note was made of questions that were left blank and by how many staff, and how many were negative responses. Because the questionnaire was set out under the headings of the three sections within the IA, the data gathered formed the basis for that analysis, set out in chapters 5 and 6,

supplemented by the written comments from the teachers' reflective diaries and semi-structured interviews (see below).

There was one further source of written data used in this research and that is documentation from or about the school. The school's managers were generous in their willingness to share information as part of this project. They gave me a copy of their recent and confidential self – evaluation form (SEF) and of their specialist status bid and provided other documentation on request, such as the ethnic breakdown of the staff. I also used the school's recent Ofsted reports.

Semi-structured interviews

Aware of the possibility of mishearing and misrepresenting the words and actions of the teachers, including their written words, I asked the head teacher for permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with three members of the humanities staff, who were different from the four staff keeping reflective diaries. (I thus gained detailed responses from seven of the 11 humanities teachers.) She and they agreed readily and this gave me the opportunity to:

- check my understanding of what they had said and written;
- ensure that my interpretation of others' words was congruent with their recollection and interpretation;
- give them the opportunity to elucidate further their thoughts and reactions to the work we had done together.

The three members of staff selected were, again, a cross-section of the faculty team: one of the school's senior managements, Clive; a teacher with teaching and learning responsibilities (TLR 1), Annie; and a main scale teacher, Nasima. There were two women and one man and there were two white teachers and one from a minority ethnic group. An interview schedule was prepared which allowed for 'free-wheeling … based on the use of an interview guide' (Bernard, 1994, quoted by Cheetham, 2001). The interviews consisted of generic questions asked of all and then specific questions based on a first analysis of my fieldnotes and the flip charts they had completed. Each interview was conducted in private and lasted about an hour and was recorded and transcribed for later analysis. In the transcriptions I tried to capture hesitation and emotion by indicating pauses and emphasis (Nesbitt, 2001, 152). By this point, I believe I had developed a very good working relationship with the teachers, based on mutual respect. They became what Alam and Husband describe as 'conversational partners' rather than 'objects of research' (2006, 21).[5] This is, they say, an 'ethically sound basis' on which to conduct research and that was important for me. Erricker (2001) refers to the work of Kvale (1996) who used two metaphors to describe the relationship between interviewer and interviewee: miner and traveller (2001, 159).[6] Retrospectively, although I was mainly like the latter, gathering material on 'a journey for a tale to be told', there were times when I was a miner, unearthing what is buried when, for example, I encouraged one of the senior teachers to dig into his vast experience and describe the various manifestations of young Muslims' identity.

The generic questions I asked the three teachers began with a list of the key themes I had identified that had arisen during the CPD sessions (see chapters 3 and 4) and I asked the staff to confirm or amend them and to prioritise them from their own perspective. I asked all of them what they had found the most interesting and the most useful of the various activities we had undertaken together, what impact the work had had/would have on them and what, if anything, could have been done differently.

I then asked different questions of each of the three individuals, based on my fieldnotes and on their written answers to questions. For example, Annie had used the phrase 'a little more confusion and a little more clarity' when describing what she had got from the sessions and I wanted her to explain this further. Nasima, the main scale Pakistani-heritage Muslim teacher had, on more than one occasion, raised the question of pupils' anti-Semitism and their 'identity confusion'. I wanted to give her the opportunity to explore those questions more fully. The school senior manager, Clive, had referred to wider school issues such as attendance and their participation in the Mirpuri Connection and, again, I wanted to give him time to expand on those more fully and thus help set this research into a whole school context.

The teachers agreed that these interviews could be recorded but during one of the interviews I switched off the recorder because the teacher clearly felt uncomfortable. She lowered her voice and looked around her,

as if checking to make sure that no-one else could hear. It was clear to me that she was asking for this to be confidential and I therefore switched off the machine while she continued to talk. What she then said has not been used in reporting this research. I asked her permission to switch the recorder back on when we moved to the next part of the interview.

This small incident is important. First, I believe that it shows the teacher's confidence to share strong personal opinions with me, a sign that I was trusted as a researcher. Second, it is an example of the ethical obligation on researchers to be sensitive to their respondents' wishes and to act accordingly.

The final set of data gathered from the teachers was through an interview, conducted at the beginning of the following academic year. This was with the head of the faculty and his deputy and it focused on the impact of the CPD on the teachers, the faculty and the school. Again, the interview was recorded and transcribed for analysis. The questions that were put to them were based on the findings of the research and documentation from the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA, 2007) on effective CPD. If the data gathered in this study were to demonstrate that the deployment of the interpretive approach to teachers' professional development had been effective then there had to be clear, objective criteria on which the evaluation could be based.

Data from students

There was one further data set which came about because the students asked me for feedback on their session with their teachers. I invited the humanities staff to attend this but only the head of faculty appeared, though he was mainly tidying up at the back of the room, adding in an occasional comment. I wanted to have their clarification and confirmation of what they had said in their conversations with the teachers, particularly on the themes of their identity and their knowledge of the diversity within Islam which seemed to me to be considerable. The conversations at this session were used to compare with and check the accuracy of my fieldnotes and the entries in the teachers' reflective diaries. To support this further, I also asked the students to complete a brief information sheet (see Appendix 4) which asked them about their post-code (a key theme in relation to their sense of identity that had arisen during the interviews), their religion, ethnicity, languages read and spoken, their identity (ies) and their community (ies). The data that emerged from the students is largely treated as background information for, as interesting as the student-related data are, the focus of this research is on the teachers and their professional development not the students.

Analysis of data

It can be seen from the above that data were drawn from a wide range of people. This was done both to provide evidence of triangulation (Burgess, 1984, 144) and to reflect the complexity of the research field, with its many players and their different voices. The data gathered were

thus multi-layered and diverse. Giving voice to research participants is likened by James Clifford to a novelist giving voice to a character (1988, 47). What emerges then is 'dialogue and polyphony' (41) as the teachers and their informants engage together in this joint experience.

The data were initially analysed using a 'grounded theory' approach based on Glaser and Strauss (1967). In this approach, through reading and re-reading the data, the key themes emerge and are not superimposed by the researcher. Further, data collection and analysis are then 'interwoven in a dynamic way throughout the whole search process' (Cheetham, 2001, 167) so that the themes that emerged from the data in the first analysis helped determine the questions that were posed during the semi-structured interviews. When reading the first data sets, drawn from my field notes and the many written materials produced by the teachers on their CPD days, I was looking for what Nesbitt calls 'patterns and surprises' (2001, 149). As the patterns and themes emerged I was then able to draw more evidence from other sources, such as the teachers' reflective diaries, to illustrate and substantiate their teachers' responses to their experiences of the CPD. When all the evidence had been gathered, including the teachers' answers to the IA qualitative questionnaire and their responses to the summary forms on this CPD programme, I was then able to do a second level of analysis, structured around the key concepts of the IA which underpinned this study, the community of practice and the REDCo project as a whole.

Ethical considerations

I hope that it is evident in the discussion above that ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. I have already made three specific references. First, the data included in this study has gone beyond the confines of the REDCo Project themes and the key concepts of the interpretive approach and has included those questions, issues and responses that the teachers themselves raised. This is an attempt to report accurately their experiences of the CPD programme and not just my interpretation of them. I recognise that this is complex and difficult to achieve and that this is an area of criticism of ethnographic research methods (e.g. Davies, 1999; Geertz, 2000) but I have tried to let the teachers' voices be heard. Second, I treated my respondents as 'conversational partners' (Alam and Husband 2006, 21). Burgess identifies the development of relationships as 'basic to the conduct of field research' (1984, 5) and it was important to me that this study was conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognition of the teachers' considerable professional expertise. Third, there is evidence of my commitment to respecting confidentiality in the incident that occurred in interview when Nasima clearly wanted me to switch off the voice recorder so that she could speak more freely about a school issue.

Another aspect of confidentiality has been the anonymising of individuals, the school and the city where the research was based. This was important for the school and its teachers, for some controversial and difficult issues were raised to which they would not have wanted to be

linked specifically or publicly, for fear of criticism of their school and its pupils. Discussion of anti-Semitism is one example of this. The desirability and feasibility of anonymisation is an aspect of ethical considerations among ethnographers. See, for example, Burgess's discussion on confidentiality (1984, 188) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison on anonymisation (2007, 64ff).There are two ways in which anonymisation was attempted in this study. First, names were carefully chosen for individuals to give some indication of their age, gender and ethnicity.[7] Second, the school has been referred to throughout as 'School C', the name given to it in a complementary REDCo research study (Ipgrave and McKenna, 2008). Nonetheless, issues remain and anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed for the school or its teachers, despite the intention to do so.

During the research process, I indicated on a number of occasions that I was keen to share any of my written summaries of the data with the members of the faculty, though none of them took up the offer. Draft versions of the book chapter that resulted from this research (Miller, 2009) were sent to the head teacher and the head of faculty. Such offers demonstrated my commitment to transparency, as did the seeking of informed consent from both the head of faculty and the head teacher, who then sought the agreement of the faculty members before the research study began.

There is, in qualitative research literature, a recognition that the researcher, by her presence, affects the research field and there are

attendant issues about power relations. The teachers in this study knew that I was not only a researcher but an inspector/adviser from the local authority and so I worked hard to develop a relaxed and informal yet professional relationship with them and this has, I believe, resulted in the very rich data that will be presented in this study. I am also a former teacher which gave me 'insider' knowledge of schools in general and Northtown's schools in particular which I considered an advantage that more than compensated for the possible problems (such as lack of objectivity) when conducting research in a relatively familiar setting (Burgess, 1984, 21).

Finally, I believe the purpose of this research adds to its ethical credentials. This is true in relation to the REDCo Project as a whole and its commitment to social harmony across Europe but it also relates directly to these teachers for whom participation was intended to enhance their professional competence and to improve the work of their school. The evidence from the teachers' answers to the questionnaire indicated that we shared the same values in and commitment to promoting a racially harmonious and equal society.

Appropriateness of research methods

In retrospect, the research methods used were appropriate. One of the changes I would make would be to ask all teachers to keep a diary throughout the CPD sessions. This would have generated more data and simultaneously have given all of them a record of what they had learned and considered.

It was unfortunate that the school did not proceed with the CPD programme for other faculties, offering further iterations of the research process. Had that happened, some of the questions on the summary form would have been rephrased and presented differently because they did not elicit sufficient information and, in some cases, were left blank. I would now sub-divide questions, rather than having two parts to one question, and would make the questions clearer by adding in more or different words. For example, one question asked what had made them reflect on their ideas. To that I would now add 'and beliefs' because the question was designed to elicit evidence of personal edification whereas many of the teachers interpreted it as a question about professional practice. Another iteration of the research would have enabled such refinements and would have given the opportunity for some focus group interviews when some of the issues that arose in relation to the interpretive approach (such as the teachers' understanding of 'groups') could have been explored more fully.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodological and ethical bases of this practitioner research study which was conducted as part of a community of practice. The use of the term 'practitioner' rather than 'action research' has been justified and the epistemological basis of the research has been set out. This is a qualitative study based on a naturalistic and interpretive research methodology designed to evaluate the deployment of the interpretive approach to teachers' continuing professional

development. There was a double hermeneutic taking place: as the teachers were researching their religious and cultural communities and drawing meaning from their experiences, I was researching them and their responses to those experiences. To do this, a range of data was gathered using methods drawn from ethnographic research: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and analysis of written materials, including those produced by the teachers (and a group of their students) and by the school managers. The data were initially analysed using a 'grounded theory' approach and then a second level of analysis was used, drawing on the key concepts of the IA. The ethical bases of the study have been stated.

This teachers' agenda of improving their understanding of their local communities, combined with a desire to gain specialist humanities status for their school was different from but not incongruent with my own research agenda. This has had positive consequences because of the teachers' high levels of engagement but made the structuring and analysis of data more complex.

What follows in this study are those data, grouped by the key themes. These are set out in chapters 3 and 4, where I take the dominant themes that arose on particular days and explore them in some depth, combining data from various sources. The table below demonstrates this:

CPD event	Key themes	Sources used
Semi-structured interview with sixth form students	Identity British/ Pakistani?	My fieldnotes Transcribed interviews Teachers' reflective diaries
CPD Day 1	'Diversity within diversity' British Muslim	My fieldnotes Student information sheets Flip charts Plenary summary Transcribed interviews Teachers' reflective diaries
CPD Day 2	Religion and culture Interpreting the Qur'an	My fieldnotes Flip charts Transcribed interviews Teachers' reflective diaries
CPD Day 3	Tensions between communities Place of women within Islam	My fieldnotes Literature from community centre Transcribed interviews Teachers' reflective diaries Student information sheets

End-notes

[1] The school had been informed that it was a 'national challenge' school and it was required to raise its examination results very quickly to avoid the possibility of closure. This angered the humanities faculty managers.

[2] I also attended and took fieldnotes at separate but related events which were open to parents, such as the presentation evenings on the Mirpur Connection (see chapter 1).

[3] This appendix gives the adult questionnaire and highlights the changes to the original.

[4] The analysis of the questionnaire that was given to pupils across eight European countries refers often to the different ways in which students interpreted questions which validates my decision to amend where necessary (Knauth *et al.,* 2008). The changes I made are shown clearly in appendix 2.

[5] They are here quoting Rubin and Rubin (1995).

[6] The metaphor of being on a journey was used by members of the Warwick community of practice which links closely to Kvale's 'traveller' – see Everington (2009).

[7] Burgess points out that the inventing of pseudonyms is no easy task (1984, 06).

Chapter 3

The teachers' experiences of and responses to the CPD programme (part 1)

In the last chapter, I set out the research methods that were employed to gather the data for this research study. In this chapter, I describe and justify the continuing professional development (CPD) programme that was devised to test the research questions on the transferability of the interpretive approach (IA) to teachers' CPD, their understanding of and relationship with the communities their school serves and any impact on them professionally and personally. The *Curriculum Review: Diversity and Citizenship* (the Ajegbo report) said:

> Links with the community – a rich resource for education for
>
> diversity – are often tenuous or non-existent' (DfES 2007, 6).

Here was a school where improving those links was now increasingly important. Ajegbo had also pointed out that there is insufficient effective teaching training – including CPD (7). We were going to try to address that and the next two chapters provide the data that emerged as teachers engaged with their communities in a variety of contexts.

The CPD programme in relation to the Interpretive Approach (IA)

It is important to note that the school's managers could have adopted one of several different approaches and it is worth enumerating these to highlight the significance of using the IA. They could have brought in community development workers. Arrangements could have been made

for the staff to visit other schools to see how they relate to their communities. They could have invited social scientists to talk about the impact of social deprivation or religious studies specialists to help increase staff knowledge of their pupils' backgrounds. Instead, the school and faculty managers liked the principles of the IA and wanted to give staff the opportunity to deepen their professional understanding in this way.

The three key concepts of the IA - representation, interpretation and reflexivity (Jackson, 1997; 2006; 2008a and b) - are all integral to the way in which the CPD was conducted. First, the construction of the CPD programme was based on the IA principles about representation. We met and talked with individuals in the context of their community groups to gain a range of 'insider' views (Jackson 1997, 46). This avoided the reification of religions (47) or treating them as 'wholes' (49). The staff experienced religions and communities **as they are** in reality - there is no homogenisation or sanitisation taking place. Religious and cultural groups were viewed as dynamic and changing (109). As Jackson says, 'The model offers a view of religions which acknowledges their complexity and internal diversity' (2006, 401).There was no attempt at 'bracketing out presuppositions' which is standard practice in phenomenology and which Jackson rejects (1997, 21). This enabled the teachers to focus on the second principle, the interpretation of the religions and communities, through interviews and dialogue with informants. They became aware of new concepts and were given the opportunity to explore their meaning, looking for similarity and difference

(111) in order to develop their understanding. This enabled the third principle of the interpretive approach, reflexivity: if, how and in what way(s) it impacted on them professionally and personally (2008a, 315), including what Jackson calls 'edification' (1997, 111). In his words, the CPD process was 'reflexive and dialogical' (2008a, 311) - opportunities were built into the CPD programme for the teachers to engage in reflection and dialogue with informants and among themselves.

In the following account of the tasks undertaken by the teachers the words 'dialogue' and 'conversation' are used interchangeably (Jackson, 1997,121). 'Dialogue' is the term used in the REDCo title and often has academic and deeper connotations than 'conversation' might imply, yet that is the term Jonathan Sachs adopts as the means whereby the 'dignity of difference' can be explored (2002, 83-4). Therefore the two terms will be used interchangeably, covering both the teachers' semi-structured interviews and their many conversations with, for example, members of an Asian women's sewing class, managers at community centres and a hijab-wearing Muslim woman who explained its meaning and significance for her. It also includes the many conversations they had with each other as they engaged with this project. As Ajegbo said, 'the **process** of dialogue and communication must be central…' (his emphasis) in addressing issues of identity and diversity (DfES 2007, 8). It is also worth noting the point made by Bertram-Troost *et al.* (2008) in relation to dialogue and conflict. These two are often seen in opposition when in fact conflict can be a catalyst for dialogue and their relationship

then becomes dialectical (405).[1] Evidence of this was found during the CPD project and is commented on below.

Parallel processes?

It is important to note that the teachers themselves were engaging in ethnographic-style research activities, as I was engaged in ethnographic research of them. They were participant observers during the *aarti* ceremony in the Hindu temple and as they drank tea with Sikhs in the *langar* at the *gurdwara*. They conducted semi-structured interviews with their sixth form students and engaged in a range of conversations to develop an understanding of the meaning their informants attached to their beliefs and activities. In other words, they and I were using the similar methods and yet, I would suggest, there were differences. Rather to my surprise, the staff made no attempt to record what they were learning. They took no notes or photographs, despite their obvious interest. There was no evidence that they undertook any reading to understand more fully what they had learned. There was no systematic analysis of their experiences, though they were very keen to discuss and explore more fully what they had learned. I had not asked these things of the teachers, primarily because I was acutely conscious of their very busy professional lives. I was dependent on their co-operation and did not want to risk placing unwelcome burdens on them. Some of this reticence also links to the tension I felt between my roles as the researcher and as the CPD leader. Had there been more time, and in another iteration of the study, there might have been more focus on

recording information for more detailed consideration, and some discussion of the methods employed.

There is another way in which what the teachers were doing was analogous to my research for they too formed, in some respects, a 'community of practice'. They were engaging in a process of professional development where the same conceptual framework (based on the interpretive approach) and the same methods of investigation were used by all. They met in this group as equals, despite the differences in their status and professional experience. They were experiencing together what is known as 'situated learning' (Altrichter, 2005, 14; Lave and Wenger 1991) by which is meant learning that is engaging with the social world which occurs through a community rather than the individual.

This is congruent with the epistemological basis of this research study as non-positivist and constructivist. The teachers engaged in informal research, they gathered information which they shared with each other and they reflected on its meaning and the implications it had for them and their school.

The CPD programme

The continuing professional development programme was conducted over two academic years and there was therefore some movement of staff; there were 12 members of staff who participated with a core of 11 involved throughout.[2] The staff were mainly white British with one Asian

Muslim woman (who is a former pupil); there were six male teachers and five female; there were two members of the senior management team (both of whom are previous heads of the humanities faculty), four middle managers and five main scale teachers all of whom are part-time with the exception of one young teacher[3]. The faculty is strong and experienced, the present head of faculty has been in post for 13 years and there is a low staff turn-over, according to the school's 2007 (SEF). On some occasions, including the first and last sessions, the head teacher attended, along with another deputy. She was keen to know as much about the project as possible and to show her support for it.

The CPD sessions were conducted in as informal and open a way as possible. Small details, such as starting with tea and biscuits, helped set the ethos. I was aiming to create a 'safe space' where the teachers could feel comfortable to talk, share and challenge each other and me, ensuring that there were ample opportunities for questions and comments and that all were received with equal respect. This was helped by the fact that this was a team of people who respected each other and who often, in the course of my observations, had conversations about issues relating to identity, community and culture, seeking to find ways to deal with controversial or complex situations. Throughout the sessions with the humanities faculty staff I felt that they were keen to know and understand more.

The first CPD session

To prepare the teachers for the interviews and visits that were key elements in the CPD programme, a series of in-school twilight training events took place which began in January 2007. The first was attended by two extra members of the senior management team, in addition to the humanities faculty staff. There were 14 people present, sitting in three groups in the school library. I began the session with a quiz on local demographics to explore the variety of communities that existed and then staff were given graphic data about their school. The first (see fig 1) showed the location of the school and where their pupils live and the second showed the relative levels of social deprivation in those areas (see fig 2). They were then given graphs showing the changes in the school population over the last five years and were invited to consider all these data in relation to their work. The diagrams were provided by the LA's information service and staff had not seen them in this format before. They were fascinated and discussed them enthusiastically in their groups.

I then introduced two of the key concepts from Northtown's community cohesion strategy for the staff to explore - identity and community - and, working in groups, they were asked to write down aspects of their own identity onto post-it notes and to categorise them. The vast majority of their responses about identity were as members of their families, with work as the second identity indicator. Only three made reference to religion whereas eight included sport or leisure activities. They then related their identity/ies to their concept of community and the

communities to which they belonged. There were four that were included by all three groups: home; work; street/village/town; and church/parish.

At the end of that session the teachers were invited to consider 'next steps' which were recorded onto flip charts. They came up with a number of suggestions, including specific ways of working that coincidentally, and fortunately, correlated with the interpretive approach. The teachers wanted to talk to their students about their sense of identity and their aspirations; they wanted to talk to adults within the community and to go out to visit religious and community centres; they wanted to find out more about students' backgrounds. They also had other suggestions, such as finding out how other schools developed better relationships with their community. I was pleased that so many of their own ideas were congruent with the overall approach I had already agreed with the school's senior managers.

The session ended with staff recording their responses to this first CPD session: eight said there was interesting information; eleven referred to 'community'; three referred to the school's humanities specialist status bid (some staff were heavily involved in developing this bid and it was a main preoccupation for them). The responses were very positive with only one slightly negative comment from the youngest teacher who said 'too many graphs'. 'Thought provoking' and 'extremely informative' said one of the deputy heads. 'Brought into clear view many of the things we thought about [School C]' said David, the deputy head of faculty and - ever on the look-out for classroom ideas - one teacher said: 'Super ideas

for our RE social harmony unity. Thanks!' Another of the participants wrote: 'Good participation by all staff'. I agree.

The second CPD session

In the second session staff were reminded that the school's humanities specialist status bid identifies three groups with whom they will work: Asian women, migrant workers and local senior citizens. It had been agreed that we would focus on the first two groups initially and staff, working in two groups, were asked to write down on large charts what they knew already about Asian women and migrant workers. They were asked to record their impressions, concerns, questions and feelings as well as the knowledge they possessed, and what they thought the source of their perceptions were. In this study it is only the data from the 'Asian women' group that is recorded because a decision was made to delay focusing on migrant workers which, regrettably, never happened.

They were asked how they could increase their knowledge and improve their relationships with their community and they identified a number of ways in which this could be done which were then set down as an action plan for the future. Their desired outcomes from the CPD programme were: closer links with community; attendance of students and parents at parents' evenings; the development of more positive relationships; and improved perceptions of school by the community. They asked the following questions: How do we break down barriers? How do we connect with them and get them into school? And their answer was: go out into community and work with all-female groups. The teachers'

sources of information on Asian women included: students; parents; experience of teaching Asian women; relationships with Asian colleagues; community links; media; friends; and mosque visits.

The third CPD session

Regrettably, there was then a long gap before the next CPD session because of pressures on staff time and so it was in September 2007 that the next phase of the project began again. One of the decisions agreed with the managers of the humanities faculty was that teachers should have the opportunity to engage in semi-structured interviews with some of their sixth form students. This was a way of teachers gathering information that was entirely congruent with the IA. In this CPD session staff undertook three tasks: first to choose and complete a form setting out which of the religious sites and community centres they wanted to visit; completion of an amended version of the questionnaire that had been given to their students by Julia Ipgrave, another member of the REDCo community of practice (see Appendix 2); and they discussed and planned for the forthcoming interviews with students. I had prepared a possible interview schedule for the teachers to use, developed through discussion with the faculty managers and based on the issues that had arisen during earlier CPD sessions. This schedule was then amended by the teachers and I produced the final version (see appendix 5). It was agreed that the aim of the interview session was to deepen knowledge and understanding of local communities through some of their members from the school community.

Presentation of data

The data that now follow in this chapter and in chapter 4 are presented in a combined form: they are largely dealt with chronologically in that they are introduced at the point when they first arose in the CPD programme but they are also presented, where possible, by theme. As explained in chapter 2, I used a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify the key themes that had been dominant in the teachers' conversations and written submissions. Many of these themes were returned to in a number of contexts. Rather than present all of these instances separately, I have combined data on specific themes to avoid repetition and to give authentic voice to the main concerns that different groups of teachers raised.

Although only one of the groups visited a mosque, Islam was the religion that emerged as the dominant religion throughout the CPD sessions, partly because they all talked to a Muslim informant and partly because it is the main religion in the school and the main minority religion in Northtown. Islam is also, of course, given considerable attention by politicians and the media and this was an opportunity for teachers to explore, in a safe environment, what Waite, in a paper for the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, calls 'difficult conversations' (Waite, n.d., 5). Most, but not all of what follows, focuses on Islam and perceptions of the Muslim communities in Northtown.

Staff Interviews with students

On 1 October, 2007, the humanities staff met after school and divided into two groups to engage in a semi-structured interview with their sixth form students (see appendix 5).[4] The head of faculty's criteria for selecting students were based on my request that there should be male and female students following academic and vocational courses. Six students attended: two girls and four boys. The girls, who expressed a lack confidence, wanted to remain together so one group consisted entirely of male informants. Each group met for about 45 minutes. I sat in as an observer in one of the sessions and recorded the other.

The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to get beyond the way in which religions and communities may appear to the staff and to focus instead on the actual experience of students, all of whom were of Pakistani heritage. It was about teachers being able to access their students' 'subjectivity', but in a way that remained 'objective' and therefore appropriate for the relationship between teachers and students. This has long been recognised as essential in the study of religions including, for example, the Schools Council's influential *Working Paper 36* (1971, 22).

Identity (ies) was one of the key themes in the interview schedule along with its corollary concept of 'community (ies)'. In terms of their sense of their own identity (ies), the students were asked about what they thought was important about themselves, how their identity expresses itself, whether aspects of their identity conflict with one another and

what they want their teachers to understand about their identity/ies. The Ajegbo report listed understanding of identities as one of the 'things that need to happen' (DfES 2007, 25). In fact this was already one of the school's own aims, set out in their SEF. The students were not being interviewed as 'representatives' of their religions or communities, but as individuals whose voices were of experience not authority (McKenna, Ipgrave & Jackson, 2008, 96).

On their sense of community they were asked similar questions, including what makes their community different from others, what it's like to be a member of that community (ies), whether there are similarities between their communities and what they wanted their teachers to understand. There were questions about the school, what they valued and what they would change about its relationship with its community (ies). One of these interview sessions was chaired by a member of the school's senior management team and the other by the head of the humanities faculty.

Identity

At the beginning of the interview I observed, the teachers' first question was about identity and the students' immediate response was to identify themselves as Muslim. 'We all have religion in common', volunteered one of the boys. This came as no surprise to the teachers for they knew from their own experience that religion was the key identifier for the vast majority of their Pakistani-heritage pupils (Alam & Husband, 2006, 4). But what did surprise the teachers was that post-codes were also key

identifiers, giving the students a strong sense of local identity and loyalty. As one of them said 'We're all [Northtown] like' and immediately that was qualified by reference to post-codes: [NT] 8 and 9 are 'different', he added. The teachers were interested in this, as Sarah wrote in her reflective diary:

> Even more surprising was that part of their identity was formed by their post code i.e. I am a [NT] eighter *etc.* (RD 4).

The teachers tried to pursue this during their interview with the students to understand what 'post-code identity' meant to them but it was not made clear. The students said that it's not about social class and it's not about where they come from. It just means the people you 'hang around with'. One student said that people in the other post-code were 'less civilised'. Ian, the head of faculty, wrote in his diary that:

> The issue of class distinction within the Pakistani/Muslim community came as a surprise' (RD 1)

While David, his deputy, wrote:

> It was clear that they all came from very different backgrounds but their religion and being part of British society were both important to them (RD 2).

White British teachers' ability to differentiate between social groups, linked to language use, in communities that are different from their own is a complex matter and it is difficult for them to make other than generalised judgements. This CPD process, using individuals to give them some understanding of identities and communities, is beginning to

have some impact, even though their informants could not articulate their views clearly.

British and or Pakistani?

In answer to a teacher's question 'What nationality are you?' one student replied 'British' and another immediately added 'Pakistani as well'. The language used by the sixth form students revealed a strong sense of connectedness to Pakistan and in a number of instances they used the phrase 'back home'.[5] The teachers picked up on this and asked them to explain what they meant. The students said that young people don't see Pakistan as 'home', that they use the phrase because it's what their parents say and concluded: 'It's just a sort of turn of phrase or something'.[6] Sarah summed this up in her diary:

> The other girl said she was clear that she was British Asian
> and yet kept referring to Pakistan as 'going back home'. So in
> some ways I think they see themselves as one thing and yet
> in general conversation they do slip into separating
> themselves (RD4).

When asked if they might go to live in Pakistan in the future, they all said not, adding that it would be 'kind of hard' to live there and they used terms like 'difficult' and 'different'. 'To be honest,' said one of them, 'I don't really like it back home'. After this conversation, every time one of them used the phrase 'back home' it brought forth laughter from the others. This is all echoed in Alam's anthology of men brought

up in Northtown, one of whom, for example says he's not the same sort of Pakistani as people in Pakistan and adds:

> You go over there thinking it's your roots and all that and when you get there, they turn round and tell you to swivel on it, practically (2006, 6).

This issue of being British and/or Pakistani was a topic that generated many discussions between the teachers throughout the project. One of the female teachers, Annie, in interview repeated a conversation with one of her students who said: 'My house is a mini-Pakistan, Miss; when I'm at home I live in Pakistan'. This caused her considerable concern. The same notion appears in Alam's anthology where one of his respondents said, 'Closest thing to Pakistan abroad is probably [Northtown] (2006, 189).[7] The teachers were very conscious of what they saw as the uneasy relationship between their students' Pakistani and British identities and it formed one of the themes to which they returned frequently, as we shall see below.

Participants' views on the interview session

After their interview I had feedback from both teachers and students about the interview process and the benefits it brought. In the interpretive approach edification occurs as learners/researchers engage with communities but what was particularly interesting here was that the students also felt that they had benefited from the process. 'It kinda reminds you how lucky you are,' said one. They continued:

Student 1   It's good to put ideas forward to teachers. It gives

teachers…. [Pause]…

Student 2   Insight

Student 1   Yeah, insight into your opinions and your views. It sort of

bridges the gap.

Student 2   It makes you have a closer relationship with teachers. Makes

them a sort of friendly figure.

And, importantly, as another said, it:

… makes you think about your identity, like. We don't often

talk about it – never talk about it'.

It was also evident that the staff benefited as Annie said at the end of

the session:

It's really opened my eyes. Everything they said was

interesting. So many things are different from what I

thought.

When I asked her to expand on this in her interview, she replied:

I've never met those three students before but I was also

totally amazed at the three different responses from the

three individual students. But, because we did that first and

then went out I could totally understand why we got those

three responses… I would, like I say, like to have taken that

further and I **do** think we could have found out a lot more in

a school context about helping our students or working with

our students if we did more sessions like that.

Clearly, this is an activity that teachers, in any school, with appropriate support and training could undertake with their own students. On the basis of the evidence emerging from this study, there would be significant benefits in deepening understanding and strengthening relationships.

Further reflections and conversations

Immediately after this session with the students, Clive, one of the senior leadership team said to his colleagues that the students were constantly 're-inventing themselves', his version of Fredrik Barth's 'socially constructed' identity (Alam & Husband, 2006, 9). In interview, later, I asked Clive what he meant by that and he said that over the last 15 years he has seen various expressions of students' identity:

- Going back to Pakistan and making their fortunes

- Then it was, 'No way, José, am I ever going back there'

- There was a pride in what was called 'fraudie' - fraud…'[8]

- … to being an embarrassment about that

- Black hip-hop kind of people

- Everybody wanted to be Islamic… and there are some students who still do but…

- … that's less overt than it was two or three years ago.

These astute observations echo the statements of analysts such as Samad and Sen (2007) and their study of transnationalism in Europe, the evolving relationship between the 'home country' and the 'host country':

> The old diasporas of yesterday have become the transnational
> communities of today, and Muslims have strong networks both
> as ethnic and religious communities … cultural identities are
> reformulated, resulting in new ethnicities.
>
> (Samad, 2007, 11)

Samad continues by saying that Muslims are reconstructing identity as an interaction between transnational and local processes: a development more advanced among the youth of the Muslim population (Samad, 2007, 12-13). But clearly, for the young this is a challenging process, as it is for their teachers who were trying hard to understand it and its ramifications.

The balancing of identities and the potential confusion that might result was a theme to which the teachers and their informants referred many times. 'Identity confusion' was the term the teachers adopted and it became a dominant theme. There was, perhaps, some evidence of this from the students when they were asked to complete a form about themselves (see appendix 4). One wrote 'I see myself as a ~~Muslim~~ British Muslim' [his correction]. Another wrote 'Pakistani' and then corrected his form to include 'British'.

Identity confusion was linked by some of the teachers' informants to the view that young Pakistani-heritage students in Northtown were 'lost'.[9] Young people are confused, said Asif, one of the adult informants, between three different areas: Pakistani culture, western culture and Islam. When asked by one of the teachers why he didn't suffer from

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identity confusion his answer was that he had done so when he was young. 'I thought I was Asian.' This question of identity confusion and its potential dangers is found in a range of writings, including Husain in his best-selling *The Islamist*: 'This mixed heritage of being British by birth, Asian by descent, and Muslim by conviction was set to tear me apart in later life' (2007,3).

In interview I asked Clive, one of the senior teachers, about 'identity confusion' and being 'lost' and the school's role in that:

> Well, that's part of this swinging back and forth between Islam and western what- have- yous and I'm sure that some of them are, many of them, are confused and we don't help them because, you know, we perhaps do expect that they will present themselves, behave... em... differently when they're here than when they're at home and in their own communities. That's a huge burden for a young person to have to do... I think they are lost.

The students who were interviewed and with whom I had a later meeting did not talk about themselves as 'lost' but they felt that other young Muslims were. 'Identity confusion' was linked to abandoning Islam by both adult and student informants. One of the Muslim informants, Tariq, said that young people 'move away from religion' and others linked this to attendant social problems, including drugs, alcohol and divorce. Yasmin, the female Muslim informant, suggested that Muslim pupils need to understand Islamic values and said that schools should teach these to

Muslim pupils. The staff, however, rejected this as inappropriate in a state community school, asserting the secular nature of education and their unwillingness to compensate for the failure of the mosques and the community to support their own young people's understanding of Islam. As Nasima said in her interview:

> We are a secular school and that's the way we should be …
> we're not here to cater just for Muslims, we're here to cater
> for whoever walks through our doors.

A negative critique?

There were a number of instances during the CPD project when the relationship between being British and Pakistani was viewed negatively. Words like 'time warp' were used by both teachers and informants to describe the Asian community (ies). Muslims in Northtown are more 'traditional' than people back in Pakistan, it was claimed by staff who have been there (see chapter 1). An informant on the second CPD day, a white community centre manager, said that 'Asian immigrants' are in a time frame that is '40 years out of date', claiming that the local population still think as if they were in their villages in Pakistan (Lewis, 2007, 53). The teachers, and at least some of their informants, linked this to social class: 'the working classes haven't moved on in their thinking', it was claimed. Samad and Sen substantiate the view that social class is a major factor (2007, xiv) and yet this is a vast generalisation of a diverse community, with different economic and social status. David, in interview, said that he had not fully realised how

different the socio-economic backgrounds of their students were until this CPD took place – another example of its benefit.

A further negative criticism was aired by the same community centre manager who told us that 'where you come from' is all that matters in the community. He used the term 'tribal' to describe this and what he is referring to is the *biradari* or brotherhood. Rather than the *umma* (the worldwide Muslim community), it is the brotherhood or clan that lies at the root of everyday life for Muslims and is the dominant political force within communities, including mosques (Lewis, 2007, 5).[10] Lewis also says that the youth are the casualties in the battle between the '*biradari* diehards' and those who believe it has no place in modern British society (46). Nonetheless, the concept is not universally accepted among the local community. One of Alam's respondents said he knew what it was but '*biradari* to me means nothing' (2006, 61) – a small piece of evidence of the constantly changing nature and diversity of communities.

The teachers found themselves both participating in and observing these critical exchanges and this links to the interpretive approach's 'constructive critique' of what is being studied. What actually took place was often a negative rather than a constructive critique with which the teachers sometimes agreed and sometimes did not. This is discussed further in chapter 6.

Identity in context

Islam in particular and religion in general was at the heart of many of the conversations that the teachers had among themselves and with their informants and the centrality of religious identity was rarely questioned. The only Muslim teacher in the humanities faculty summed up Muslim identity in interview, adding her own shrewd comment:

> Muslims believe that, that the first and foremost thing in your life is your religion and you have the Muslim community and then everything else follows from that … but if, for example, you know, you have a girl wanting to marry a white convert suddenly the Muslim identity **isn't** as important [laughter] as where they're from. So it doesn't always work…

Jonathan Sachs has written that we are 'now entering an age of the politics of identity' and adds that this is why religion, one of the 'great answers to the question of identity' is now emerging as 'a powerful presence on the world stage' (2002, 10). At another level Julia Ipgrave's school based research has shown her:

> … how significant religious identity is to [students'] self-understanding and to their understanding and encounter with those of different backgrounds from themselves (2005, 39).

Thus, identity is both this grand, over-arching theme and an intensely personal matter which young people and their teachers continually have to address in their own context. An increasing number of descriptors are used in relation to identity: the Commission on Integration and Cohesion

refers to it as 'multiple and fluid' (2007a, 2); Alam and Husband see it as 'changing and dynamic' (2 006, 11); there is 'hyphenated identity' (Østberg 2003; Cooper & Lodge, 2008, 13); 'compound' identities (Sardar, 2009, 49) and 'hybrid identity' (Davies, 2008, 33). Skeie helpfully situates this within what he calls modern plurality, a descriptive term, which is inextricably linked with identity and which he differentiates from pluralism, a normative term that indicates values and attitudes in relation to our plural societies (1995, 86). The notion of 'positive pluralism' is a development of this (Cush, 1999; Cush and Francis, 2001).

The teachers understood that these are sensitive and complex matters and they would recognise the need for education to 'take account of individuals' capacity to integrate a variety of group identities' (Nesbitt, 2005, 23). She and Jackson prefer the term 'multiple cultural competence' (1993, 174), stressing that young people can navigate cultural differences, to use Ballard's term, rather than being victims of cultural conflict. The teachers' perceptions of their Muslim pupils' identity appears to fall into the latter of these contrasts and they expressed many concerns about it, despite their commitment to 'positive pluralism' and their support for hybrid identities. Lewis believes that there is a lack of support for young Muslims within their own community and that mainstream provision (which by definition must include schools) is 'unaware of their particular conflicts rooted in multiple identities', leaving them 'isolated' (2007, 58). I believe that these teachers became

increasingly aware of the issues of identity through this CPD project and wanted to protect their students from isolation.

Not all writers are as negative in their judgement as Lewis. Alam and Husband see the current situation as an opportunity for 'cultural creativity' as the young define their 'acceptable ethnic affiliation (2006, 10). They make a further significant point when they point out that ethnicity, like identity, is 'not a fixed property' but 'an ever changing social process'. They continue:

> *The image of the social and psychic exclusion and alienness of young Muslim Pakistani men from the [Northtown] norm, that is the pernicious undertow of the Ouseley and Cantle Reports, is mocked by the grounded [Northtown-ness] of the discourse and social horizons of the young men in this cohort.* (2006, 50) [their italics]

It is important to add that the 'young men' in Alam's research were considerably older than the students in School C. Nonetheless, Alam and Husband's rejection of what they see as pathological representation of the Pakistani-heritage community in Northtown forms a radical contribution to the debate, to which I shall return in chapter 6.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the ways in which the principles of the interpretive approach determined the construction of the continuing professional development sessions, in order to test its transferability from RE in schools to teachers' CPD. Parallels between my research

methods within a community of practice have been drawn with the teachers and their analogous activities within their humanities faculty community. The preparatory sessions with the teachers have been described and the data that arose from them have been presented. These focused particularly on the semi-structured interview sessions with their sixth form students when the issue of identity and how far the students, and their communities, saw themselves as British and/or Pakistani were the dominant themes. The teachers' increasing understanding has been noted, as have their challenges to their informants and their use of language such as 'back home'. The expression of negative critiques of the Pakistani-heritage communities by informants and between the teachers has also been noted and will be discussed below. I have related these findings to relevant literature, especially to research that was also conducted in Northtown.

The next chapter continues the presentation of the data and turns to the three main events that lay at the heart of these CPD sessions: visits on three days by groups of the faculty members to community centres and places of worship, and their interviews with community members.

End-notes

[1] Fancourt (2009, 213) argues that 'difference' would be a more accurate term than 'conflict' but these teachers found tension, not just difference.

[2] This included four part-time members of staff who attended some but not all of the twilight sessions. There was also one support member of staff who came on the day's training but had not been to the twilight sessions.

[3] Main scale teachers are without specific, remunerated responsibilities in school.

[4] Asian teachers and a governor were also invited to be interviewed in the second half of the session but the governor did not respond and the teachers were unable to leave their own faculty meetings in time in order to attend, despite assurances that they would do so, a situation which the head of the humanities faculty noted as 'sad'(RD 1). Two community development workers based at the school also attended one of the groups, later that afternoon, and evidence from that was included in the staff reflective diaries.

[5] As did Alam's respondents in his research in the same town e.g. 2006, 41

[6] Another such phrase was 'you lot'. In the plenary session on the first CPD day the staff noted their students' use of this when referring to white people, observing that they saw all white people as Christians and all Muslims as Pakistanis.

[7] There are strong economic links between Northtown and Mirpur where people rely on money coming in from abroad (see Alam 2006, 50, 67). Pedziwiatr (2007, 30) quotes Geaves who argued that the 'myth of return' legitimised 'continued adherence to the norms and values of their home country and to condemn assimilation with the culture of their host society (Greaves (sic), 1996, 58)'.

[8] This is his code language for cheating that has peer approval

[9] In a public talk (Ilkley, 8 October 2008) Alam said that most of his respondents did not feel this sense of confusion. Only two speak of it in his anthology (2006, 75; 168).

[10] The Cantle report (Home Office, 2001, 23) confirms this.

Chapter 4

The teachers' experiences of and responses to the CPD programme (part 2)

In the last chapter, I explained how the interpretive approach (IA) determined the structure, content and methods of the continuing professional development programme (CPD) for the teachers. In this chapter, I set out the data that emerged from the three CPD days when the staff visited community centres and places of worship and had opportunities to engage in dialogue with community members and leaders, as well as with each other. The teachers took the opportunity provided by the deployment of the IA to address matters that were of professional concern to them. These were twofold: the fulfilment of community requirements of their specialist humanities status bid and their concerns that their school was separated from its community (ies), both by distance and by culture. The data that emerged are again presented thematically in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. The themes that arose – 'diversity within diversity', being a British Muslim, the relationship and difference between religion and culture, the interpretation of the Qur'an, tensions between communities and the place of women within Islam – were all returned to many times by different groups in different settings.

Days of dialogue and participant observation

The main activity of the CPD programme was a day, off-site, in November 2007. Each day took the following format:

- o Preparation – held at a resource centre – when staff shared their existing knowledge and raised the issues they wanted to have addressed

- o A visit to a place of worship and a conversation with a trained guide – the first group went to a Sikh gurdwara, the second to a mosque and the third to a Hindu mandir.

- o A visit to a community centre and a conversation with a community leader; two of these centres were within the main geographical areas served by the school and the third was a women-only community centre which the teachers had specifically requested.

- o A conversation with an Asian woman, Yasmin, who is employed as a guide and Muslim faith tutor at the resource centre. She is also a voluntary community worker with the Islamic Society of Britain and was, on one afternoon, joined by her husband, Asif, who works for a Muslim charity.

- o A plenary session when the staff reflected on the day and decided what they would share with their colleagues back at school.

Themes on the first CPD day.

On the first day, 5 November 2007, the group of four staff (two women and two men, three teachers and one learning support worker) met me at the resource centre. There was a preparatory session which included what they already knew about Sikhism, what they wanted to learn from

the day and some discussion about protocol and courtesy when visiting a *gurdwara.* They then visited a community centre serving a predominantly Pakistani-heritage community, then the gurdwara and they ended with a long conversation with their female Muslim informant. Throughout the day, as on the other days, the staff participated with enthusiasm and engaged easily and eagerly in conversations.

There were two main themes that arose on the first day, both of which were also shared with the other two groups. The first was what the teachers referred to as 'diversity within diversity' or its equivalent 'communities within communities', terms that the teachers kept on using and which are entirely congruent with the IA's concept of representation.

'Diversity within diversity'

Diversity was the first major theme that emerged on the visit to the *gurdwara*. Their informant was honest when asked why there were six *gurdwaras* serving a population of 4,000 Sikhs. There are, he replied, different factions - groups argue and they split. The *gurdwara* we were visiting had been set up because of a dispute over caste. The teachers appreciated the honesty of these answers and said it was refreshing to know about 'falling out' within the community. They used the term 'splintered community' to describe the Sikhs of Northtown. David, the deputy head of faculty, wrote in his reflective diary: 'It seems that no group in society is quite as united as they would like to make out' (RD

2). They were beginning to see that the dividing line between 'diversity' and 'division' was quite fine.

With regard to diversity within Islam, the teachers already knew about Shi'a and Sunni (and they knew which of their students are Shi'a), they were also aware of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Afghani identities but further differentiation was new to most of them. Rosemary wrote in her reflective dairy:

> The Asian community is more diverse than I had realised. We are not dealing with one culture but many subcultures from the very traditional to the modern (RD 3).

For the teachers, the dividing line between diversity and division and the relationship between and within groups became complex and confusing. In his visits to mosques, Clive had picked up some of this and referred in interview to:

> … the back biting and political in-fighting I've become aware of goes between the mosques and between different branches of Islam…

The teachers said they needed to know more about the groups and divisions. Clive visited mosques in the course of his work, meeting the communities and sometimes speaking at Friday prayers. When he spoke of 'the Pathan mosque', and the 'Wahhabis', for example, some staff looked at each other blankly; his knowledge and experience was far greater than most. It quickly became clear that the teachers were

unfamiliar with the terms used by their Muslim informants, such as Deobandi, Barelvi or Hanafi, to describe religious movements. Even Clive said, 'The complexity of it is something I'm only just beginning to skim the surface of'. However, it became apparent quite quickly that the teachers had little interest in pursuing the details of diversity – the different groups, their origins or their teachings – in order to understand them better. They wanted to be more aware of diversity in order to be more sensitive to their pupils and to do their job more effectively but detailed knowledge or understanding seemed to be more than they needed. This was directly linked to what they perceived their professional needs and interests to be.

'British Muslim'

The second theme on which the teachers focused on the first day was that of 'British Muslim' which was, for them, very different from the relationship between being Pakistani and British, discussed in chapter 3. They used the term frequently, said it was more 'palatable' and 'acceptable' and it meant that Muslims weren't 'wrapped in some dinosaur view'. They approved when Yasmin, their female Muslim informant, used it because it affirmed what they want for their students – a sense of belonging and loyalty. That was exactly what was expressed by her husband, Asif, when he said, 'I can never wait to get back… The UK is the best place for Muslims to live.' Rosemary wrote in her reflective diary '- a message some our students could be given' (RD 3).

One of the teachers' questions was how they could help their students to feel that they are 'British Muslims' and Yasmin's reply was to 'make them feel they belong'. This, of course, is more easily said than done and it reflects the teachers' professional concerns, not only about their students' academic achievements but their place as active and responsible citizens. Yasmin told them that she was not without hope for the future of young Muslims in Northtown. She talked about the work to support the young and their families being carried out by the Islamic Society of Britain, including family camps, and said 'Things are changing now'.[1] She claimed that in some cases the children are getting stronger than their parents in their faith, a view substantiated by Snow (2007, x). This claim links with the teachers' discussions about identity and is part of the complex pattern of the minority communities that the teachers are seeking to understand. In this they are not alone: a wide range of research exists including Alam and Husband (2006); Lewis (2007); Policy Exchange research (Mirza *et al.*, 2007, 5); Sahin's study of Muslims in Birmingham (2005); and Samad and Sen (2007).

'Pakistani Islam'

It was Clive, one of the senior teachers, who summed up what the other teachers were hinting at in his use of the term 'Pakistani Islam' to give his impression of the lives of their students and their families. For Annie this was a particularly pressing question because she has Muslim friends from Mauritius and Tanzania and she believed their versions of Islam differed from that practised by the Pakistani communities with whom she

was working in the school. All three groups, she said, have 'totally, totally separate cultures' and continued:

> The Mauritian and the Tanzanian will not push their religion or anything to do with their culture or religion at anyone whereas the Pakistanis will push it at you… constantly push it at you… they're still stuck in that Pakistani bit of tradition and I think that some kids do find it hard to work out which is Islam and which is culture.

For her, the Pakistani community was not only different but in a 'time warp', a term also used by one informant, and she, among others, expressed negative comments about Pakistani culture. As with many of these conversations, the teachers often moved between their personal responses and their professional situation. On this dilemma, Rosemary wrote:

> The issue of women's role in Islam I think is still a problem for me as a female teacher but also for the male students who will find it hard to embrace British society with the views they hold. The interpretation of Islam, dependent on individual mosques and family backgrounds will be hard to shift (RD 3).

There is, again, the view expressed by a teacher that the beliefs and attitudes held by the students and their families are unacceptable and that they need to be changed. They liked Yasmin and her 'version' of Islam but concluded that most of their students 'wouldn't believe half of what she's saying'. They would just say that she was wrong – the

teachers voiced this several times: their Muslim informants' views were often much more liberal than their students'. The difference, they thought, was between what the religion teaches and what the local community and culture dictate and they believed that their students were trapped between the two.

Themes on the second CPD day

The second CPD group met the following week and their day followed the same pattern as before. They visited a neighbourhood management centre in a deprived area where most of their Pakistani-heritage students live and met the manager who was white. They visited a mosque and talked at length with their guide, Tariq, who described himself as a conservative Muslim but one who has broad experience of the English education system and who is a governor at the local voluntary aided Muslim school. Like the other groups they later met Yasmin for a long conversation and concluded with a plenary session.

Religion and culture

At the beginning of the day this group of two men and two women teachers identified the difference between 'religion' and 'culture' as a key question for them though they knew it would be difficult. As Annie said later in her interview:

> … what is tradition and what isn't … it's very difficult for us to understand **them** if they don't actually understand it themselves as in what is religion, what is culture.

In this the teachers are recognising what writers say of the relationship between the two: 'disentangling religion from culture is not so easy...' Lewis (2007, 150) and 'a difficult concept to unpack' (Jackson (1997, 72) especially in a religion like Islam which is often seen by adherents as a way of life (Alam, 2006, 45).[2] Nonetheless, the teachers knew this was a question they needed to explore while they had the opportunity.

One example of the question, which occupied a good deal of their time that day, is the wearing of the *hijab.* While none of the teachers intimated that they objected to Muslim women wearing the hijab,[3] they wanted to know if it was a religious requirement or a cultural practice. They found, to their confusion, that their Muslim informants gave them both answers.

The first, Tariq, said that religion and culture go 'hand-in-hand': the Islamic view is that if culture doesn't contradict religion then 'it's fine'. The Qur'an says that when wives go out they should be covered but it doesn't mention the hijab or the niqab - the form of dress is cultural. The interpretation of the text, he said, depends on 'how seriously they take their religion'. For him, as Sarah pointed out in her diary, 'religion was more powerful than culture' but she still felt that 'if this was the case why did he seem so confused about the link between culture and religion?'(RD 4)

The second Muslim informant, Yasmin, had different views from Tariq. When asked the difference between religion and culture she replied that

wearing a *hijab* is 'a religious matter'; how you wear it 'is cultural'. One of the teachers challenged her and was told that when you wear the *hijab* you're making a statement: 'I am a Muslim'. Then she went on to criticise women who wear the *hijab* and behave badly, saying they 'misrepresent Islam'. The teachers became very confused, wanting clear and straightforward answers. I suggested that what was religious was the intention when wearing it with which Yasmin agreed but the teachers remained confused about what was a religious requirement and what was cultural practice.

Yasmin dresses in a traditional manner, wearing the hijab (one afternoon it was a Calvin Klein design) but not the niqab. She tried to explain some of the differences between different groups: it is the Deobandis, a strictly observant group, whose women are most likely to wear the niqab. Clive, in his interview commented on this phenomenon saying:

> You hardly saw [a niqab] five years ago and now in certain areas [of Northtown] they're more common than their faces and I think that's sad… I think there are two reasons: some choose as a very positive… they convince themselves that it's positive when it probably isn't and other women do it, I'm sure, under duress… I respect women who do it but it is, you know, I find it a bit… [sentence unfinished]

Clive is clearly struggling here with his genuine desire to demonstrate respect for difference in the face of an issue he finds difficult, a tension perhaps between sensitivity and empathy, in Jackson's understanding of

it (2008a, 314). As with issues of identity, there are many commentators on the increased wearing of Islamic dress: 'a highly complex and political activity' (Samad, 2007, 16); 'a symbol of defiance of Western values and of a return to Islam' (Husain, 2007, 65); an illustration of the 'abstract and global ummah' in British Muslims' search for meaning and community (Mirza, 2007, 6).

Challenging culture

The question of challenging pupils on religious and cultural matters was another aspect of their discussion of religion and culture in which the teachers, again turned from abstract questions to dealing with them in their classrooms. Bob said that there was conflict between what the religion says and what culture says and asks 'How do we cope with that at school?' On three separate occasions, he said that he was uncomfortable about challenging 'religion' - if it was 'culture' then he'd feel better. He said he didn't want confrontation and he didn't want to be 'messing around with religion' (he frequently made clear his non-religious stance on life). In the final plenary session which was attended by the head teacher, the question was discussed again. She sympathised with the staff's problem and said that she shared it. Bob admitted that he had 'backed off' in a conflict situation and a female teacher, Rosemary (the author of RD 3), quickly added that the kids are 'quick to play the race card'. The teachers were particularly anxious about this because they did not wish to cause offence to their students or their families by challenging them but they were also aware, as Nasima, the Pakistani-

heritage teacher confirmed, that some students abuse this. For example, on Friday afternoons:

> … a lot of the older boys pretend, they disappear, to go to prayers at mosques. They don't. I know they don't.

What was interesting was the fact that the teachers, like the Muslims they interviewed, wanted to give primacy to religion. If a matter was religious then they would respect it but if it was 'only cultural' then that was a different matter and they could challenge it. This raises complex questions, including the reification of both religions and cultures and a view of both as fixed and separable when they are not (Cush, 1999).

Interpreting the Qur'an

The teachers linked the issue of the relationship between religion and culture to the interpretation of the Qur'an and they adopted different stances on this. For some, the Qur'an gave room for 'interpretation and manoeuvre' when what they wanted were some definitive answers. For others, there was a realisation that they benefited from the insights provided by their informants into religion and scripture. In some respects what the teachers were playing out here is to be found in some of the pedagogies and epistemologies that have influenced religious education in recent years. Those teachers who wanted 'accurate' answers, believing that those answers exist within what are seen to be revealed religions, may find their epistemological home with, for example, Cooling and Wright, both of whom adopt a 'critical realist' position. Cooling's 'Christian realist position', that theological beliefs constitute 'an objective

and authoritative revelation of God' (Grimmitt, 2000, 40) could be transformed into a 'Muslim realist position' which is what the teachers seemed to be searching for, though Cooling warns against a simplistic adaptation (Cooling, 2000, 164). Similarly, some of them were uncomfortable with post-modern hermeneutic approaches (Grimmitt, 2003, 43) and might have preferred Wright's critical theory, in which the seeking of ultimate truth is intrinsic to the process of learning (2003, 279). And yet, their position is different in that they were not seeking truth in order to believe in it but rather, they wanted answers that would inform their professional conduct. They were perhaps more concerned with accuracy than with questions of truth: they would have been happier as 'contented pigs' rather than 'discontented philosophers' (Wright, 1993, 12).

Other teachers, however, were comfortable with the ambiguity they found within the IA. In the final plenary session, Sarah, one of the younger teachers said she now understood that there are different interpretations of the Qur'an and that she 'took a lot of comfort from that'. Now she was beginning to understand that it's 'OK to disagree'. This is confirmed in her diary (RD 4) where she wrote:

> I liked how [Yasmin] talked about the different interpretations of the Qur'an and how different mosques in [Northtown] followed different scholars. I can relate to this more than I could to the assumption by many, and even some of the Muslims at our school that the Qur'an was as simple and black and white when in fact it isn't.

Yasmin had told them 'we respect that there is diversity', reflecting the view of her branch of Islam (the Islamic Society of Britain) which presents itself as open and liberal. She also emphasised the importance of the current context and the need for scholars to interpret Islam for the present time. Her organisation has brought Tariq Ramadan to Northtown to speak on a number of occasions.[4]

All of this is made more complex because of the inevitably changing nature of life of the Muslim communities in Northtown, as elsewhere. For the old generation, the Qur'an is primarily part of an oral tradition of Islamic practice whereas for the younger generation, there is developing textual knowledge (Alam and Husband, 2006, 10). And what is interesting is that young people, with skills of translation, are now challenging their elders in their interpretation of the Qur'an. Lewis writes, 'Many educated young Muslims, especially women, are increasingly appealing to Islam to criticize aspects of imported parental culture, felt to be oppressive and dysfunctional' (2007, 150).

There are issues here about the teachers' exploration on the one hand of making meaning from what they were experiencing and on the other hand claims about religious truth. Jackson (2008b) explores the similarities between his work and that of Jürgen Lott who claims that 'revealing meaning [and] … making judgements about the truth or falsity of religious claims is simply a separate issue' (2008b, 196-7).There may be a 'logical distinction' (Ipgrave and Jackson, 2009, 164)

between understanding meaning and making judgements but the two often went hand-in-hand for these teachers and they had difficulty in separating them as they searched for answers to their questions that were authoritative. Exploring this further, and providing support for it, may be necessary in the future deployment of the IA in teachers' CPD.

Themes on the third CPD day

On the final CPD day, the same pattern was followed. They went to a women's community centre and they visited a Hindu temple where they talked with a leading female member of the community. They returned to the resource centre for a conversation with Yasmin, who on this occasion was joined by her husband, Asif. The first theme that arose on day three which I have termed 'tensions between communities', had two main foci: anti-Semitism and violent extremism

Tensions between communities

Anti-Semitism was raised quite often in conversation by two of the teachers in particular: Clive, one of the senior managers and Nasima, the Pakistani-heritage teacher and they wanted to know how they could tackle it among young male Muslims. During the preparatory session that morning Nasima said that pupils were 'always taking the mick' and gave lessons on Bar Mitzvah as an example. She reported that when students were watching the video she turned it off, saying if they couldn't show respect, then they couldn't watch it. Clive pointed out that there is a lot of graffiti on what pupils referred to as 'the Jewish boy text book', saying

that virtually every copy is graffiti-ed. He was 'disturbed enormously' by what he described as a 'nasty anti-Israel, anti-Semitic undertone' which he identified as 'a racist and not a political response', adding 'and it's obvious that it's out there in the community'. In her interview Nasima stated her views clearly:

> I **warn** them very **clearly** that if there's any sign of disrespect they will leave my classroom, they will not come back for the duration whether that's four lessons or two lessons... I look at things like the Holocaust and I think it's absolutely atrocious and these kids sit there and laugh and it makes me so **mad...**

The teachers raised the issue that afternoon with Asif whose response was to confirm that Islam is not anti-Semitic and he differentiated between the state of Israel and Judaism, adding that no-one deserves contempt from Muslims. Nasima immediately challenged him (and it was interesting to note that it was often she who took on this role in the group). Nasima stated that that is how their students feel, to which he responded that such prejudice is due to 'lack of education' and pointed out that there have never been pogroms against Jews by Muslims. Nasima's answer was that what the school says in these matters 'goes against the mosque and the parents' (a statement she confirmed in interview). Rosemary, referring to the differentiation between Israel and Jews, wrote 'rather difficult to do in practice', adding 'many of our Muslim students have anti-Semitic views' (RD 3).

Back in school, the issue was raised at the final plenary session. Again, it was Nasima who introduced the topic asking where their pupils get these anti-Semitic ideas from and, answering her own question, she said 'Conspiracy theory. That's what our kids hear' (Lewis, 2007, 11). Clive talked about young people 'very openly of the opinion that 9/11 was a western plot that had nothing to do with Islam' for which the Jews were to blame but saying it was a minority of students that held this view. Supporting evidence of this phenomenon is given by a variety of writers, including Lewis (2007, 130) and Hussein (2007, 54). Topics such as this bring together a range of issues that concerned the teachers. The difference in attitude and world views of teachers and some of their pupils is one that requires sensitive unpacking and links to the requirement of the IA to move between one's own presuppositions, values and attitudes and the concepts that are being presented to enable understanding. Within the timeframe available to us it was difficult to pursue these differences between the pupils and their teachers: this will form the key question of the next research study I intend to pursue.

Violent extremism

The second key tension that the staff raised was that of violent extremism and the impact of 9/11 on the school was still remembered. Nasima recalled in interview:

> One teacher saying to me that they walked into a lesson and the kids were all shaking their desks and shouting 'Osama bin Laden' and stuff like that and, as a Muslim, I can actually

challenge anything they have to say about this quite

comfortably but as a non-Muslim, you have to tread carefully

'cos you don't want to offend...

It was clear from some of the informants that many young male Muslims

in Northtown, as elsewhere, are angry because 'They're seeing

oppression in their lands and it's supported by politicians in the west',

said Asif, in their conversation that afternoon. This view is substantiated

by a number of writers, including Husain (2007, 74ff) and Samad and

Sen (2007, xx) who see western foreign policy as pivotal. They say that

the symbolism of the 7 July atrocities taking place on the tenth

anniversary of the 10,000 massacred in Srebrenica cannot be lost (xxi).

Lewis says that the conflict in Bosnia was 'a politicising event for many

young British Muslims' (2007, 130).

These are the messages that are being heard by students in Northtown

and the teachers wanted to know and understand more about extremism

from their informants. Tariq, in his conversations with teachers on the

second CPD day, had stated confidently that the vast majority of Muslims

do not approve of what he referred to as the 'minority minority minority'.

That afternoon Asif tried to explain extremist actions to the teachers,

insisting that it's not about 'hating **our** way of life' [my emphasis]. In

trying to say why the Muslim community seemed slow to condemn

terrorist activity he said that in Islam there is no 'collective guilt - it's not

part of Islamic theology'. His arguments did not win approval by all of

the teachers. Rosemary was perplexed and irritated by what he said and in her reflective diary wrote:

> He lost me when 'explaining' to us why Islamic extremists act the way they do, he didn't justify it but implicitly blamed the west (RD 3).

These questions are difficult for teachers and form part of their every day challenges and their collective memory. Dealing with such extremism is complex and there was, certainly after 9/11, great uncertainty among teachers, in many schools in Northtown, on how best to do that.[5] These CPD sessions, had at least, given the teachers an opportunity to discuss such matters in the context of open dialogue in a 'safe space'.

The place of women within Islam

The school had named 'Asian women' as a focus in the community section of its bid to gain humanities specialist status and it was therefore an important topic for the teachers throughout all their discussions, particularly the school managers. In the second twilight CPD session I had asked the teachers to write down what they knew about Asian women and where their information and perceptions came from.

A number of points arose, some through the flip charts and mapping exercises they did as a group and others in conversation between staff as they completed their tasks. First, the teachers recognised that it is inappropriate to talk about 'Asian women' as a homogeneous group; they knew that they come from different backgrounds, follow different

religions and speak different languages. Within Islam it was recognised that there is considerable diversity and teachers spoke about the 'strong divide' between women from urban and rural backgrounds, for example, which links to poverty and social class. The teachers stated that Asian women often have traditional roles, that a significant number have only weak or no English, that they are unable to travel alone and that they are geographically isolated which leads to mental and physical health issues. There was also the view, stated by one of the male teachers, that 'males are used to their mothers doing everything' and he went on to add that that was why "lads" chose wives from Pakistan. Nasima joined in this conversation and said that a lot of Asian males don't want western Muslim women. (A common phenomenon in Northtown, of which the teachers were well aware, is marriage back into the sub-continent, currently standing at more than 50% of Pakistani-heritage marriages.[6]) Further the staff noted that there was often a negative attitude among Asian boys to women but that there is evidence of change with, for example, more mothers now going to parents' evenings. As often happened, the teachers turned this into a school-focussed discussion and the need to get out into the community, to work with all-female groups and to break down barriers.

The third CPD day provided two main opportunities for them to explore these questions further through a visit to a women's centre and an interview with Yasmin and her husband. At the women's community centre the teachers had a long conversation with the confident and articulate centre manager, a Muslim woman.

One of the main topics of conversation about women was the process and rate of change that is taking place. When asked by one of the male teachers about attitudes towards women working the manager's reply was that this is the fourth generation and that economic pressure is leading to change. 'You can't run your family on one job,' she said. The conversation that afternoon with Yasmin and Asif confirmed the view that change is coming rapidly. When asked about boys' disrespect towards women and men's mistreatment of their wives, Asif insisted that women will accept less mistreatment not least because they live in the west. Divorce is becoming more common and 'men will have to change'. It was interesting to hear from a devout Muslim man that divorce is the inevitable consequence of unacceptable male behaviour and that change is not only inevitable but desirable. For Yasmin one word seemed to sum up her view of Islamic teaching on the roles of men and women and that was 'complement' – 'we, men and women, complement each other.' She gave strong emphasis to choice within Islam and applied this to women, their form of dress and their marriage partner. 'Compulsion is not part of Islam,' she insisted.

However, the teachers were not entirely convinced and saw this is an area of continuing difference between Muslim and western, liberal values. Rosemary wrote in her diary of that conversation:

> Even when he quoted from the Koran as to the centrality &
> importance of women he did not seem to take my point that
> in practice this doesn't happen (RD 3).

Back at school during the final plenary session, the teachers discussed this at length, returning to the linked question of what is religion and what is culture. Religion might say that men and women are equal but, according to one male teacher 'culturally they're not'. Nasima pointed out that when Yasmin and Asif were in conversation 'he over-rode her' while she was speaking. Rosemary wrote:

> Modern, middle class couples are one thing but many of our students come from poor, working class homes where the boys are treated very differently from the girls. Disrespect towards women is another big problem we face at school (RD 3).

During this session the head of RE talked about his GCSE students' work on gender within Islam. Even though they had done a good deal of work on this in class, the students' answers were that 'men work, women stay at home' - there was nothing at all about being equal. He used the terms 'narrow' and, with some hesitation, 'a backward expression' based on their Islamic identity. When the head teacher pointed out that such a view was no different from white Britain in the 1950s, he replied, 'But it's being perpetuated'.

In the midst of this exchange, one of the male teachers, Bob, raised an important question and wondered aloud if what they were really doing in school was trying to 'westernise' their students. 'Good question',

responded Rosemary. In interview, when asked about this exchange, Annie said:

> Yes, maybe we are trying to western these kids but how are they going to survive in that world of work if we don't westernise them?'

Again, the teachers are showing that their experiences on the CPD course are helping them to articulate some of the issues they face in their classrooms as they work with students whose backgrounds are very different from their own. Some of the teachers' presuppositions and their principles, such as commitment to gender equality, were seen as stumbling blocks in the development of their relationship with the communities they were investigating and, again, more time was needed to explore this further.

Conclusion

This chapter, like the preceding one, has presented the data that emerged from the teachers' CPD experiences and it has attempted to present accurately their responses to their experiences and the issues that arose from them. This is fundamental to the ethical position on which the research is founded and on the 'grounded theory' approach that underpinned this first level analysis.

The data in this chapter, presented in three sets of pairs, is based on the key themes that arose on the three CPD days. The first was the teachers' engagement with diversity, a key concept in the interpretive approach.

The teachers said that they developed a better understanding of diversity but they had little interest in the details of difference: their perceived need was greater awareness rather than deeper understanding if they were to do their professional work more effectively. The second theme of the first day was that of British Muslim and the teachers' affirmation of that term, paralleled by their rejection of 'Pakistani Islam' and the 'time warp' in which they believed the majority of the 'community' lived. What the teachers wanted was what Alam and Husband call a 'current lived ethnicity, rather than a nostalgic and romanticised ossified past' (2006, 14).

A closely linked theme which dominated the teachers' conversations on the second day was the dividing line between religion and culture. They gave primacy to religion and felt that if something were 'only then they would challenge it. They wanted to show their respect for religion and they were anxious to avoid charges of racism. Their conversations often suggested a reified view of both religion and culture, which Jackson's interpretive approach rejects.

The themes on the third day were tensions between communities, with a focus on anti-Semitism and violent extremism, both of which were difficult issues for the teachers, not least in their classroom experience. Another contentious area for many of the teachers was that of the place of women within Islam and many of them struggled with their strong commitment to equality and their desire to be supportive towards the community generally and their male pupils in particular. This raised

questions about some teachers' and informants negative critiques of the 'community' which will be addressed again in the next chapter.

Throughout the CPD course, the teachers were enthusiastic and energetic even though it was not always comfortable for them for it raised challenges, ambiguities and contradictions with which they had to grapple. The opportunity to engage in these difficult conversations in a safe space is closely linked to the centrality of dialogue in the REDCo Project. In this study, dialogue and conflict are not seen as opposites but as being in a dialectical relationship (Bertram-Troost *et al.*, 2008, 405). At the end of one of the CPD days, Annie said she had 'a little bit more confusion and a little bit more clarity' and that summarises the position of many of the teachers.

In the next two chapters, the research question is addressed through a second level analysis based on the three key concepts of the interpretive approach. The first part of the research question is answered in chapter 5: 'What is the impact of the deployment of the interpretive approach in the CPD of the Humanities faculty teachers' understanding of the school's religious and cultural communities?' In chapter 6 the remaining two parts of the question are answered.

End-notes

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[1] The ISB broke away from its parent foundation, Jama'at-i Islami (of Indian origin) and its British arm, the UK Islamic Mission. ISB consists predominantly of

middle-class professional who, according to Husain (2007), align themselves with the Muslim Brotherhood (an Egyptian group) and Hamas, rather than Hizb-ut Tahrir (founded in Palestine in 1955). Husain writes that the close association between ISB and Arab Islamists led to further fracturing and internal division. These groups and sub-groups are complex and multi-faceted but, says Husain, they have now united and form the MCB, at the behest of the-then Home Secretary Michael Howard (1997). Although he describes the ISB as 'proudly British' and 'moderate', he also adds that they 'sought political domination in some way' (Husain 2007, 169,173). Husain fails, in my view, to give a sufficiently nuanced view of Islamic groups and has his own political agenda.

[2] Wright (2003, 296) usefully quotes Otto (1931) who said that culture becomes religious when its intention transcends space and time.

[3] Unlike a YouGov survey in October 2008 which said that 46% of teachers objected to the wearing of the hijab, (Kenber 2008).

[4] Tariq Ramadan is descended from the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and is a widely respected Muslim academic.

[5] The problem of how to deal with 9/11 in the classroom was a frequent question raised by teachers in the CPD sessions for both RE and Citizenship that I was running in Northtown in the autumn of 2001.

[6] This figure comes from Philip Lewis in private conversation.

Chapter 5

The teachers' understanding of their religious and cultural communities

In the last two chapters, the data that were gathered from the teachers as they participated in the continuing professional development project were presented. Evidence from the teachers' conversations, writings, interviews and flip chart summaries was collated using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), giving them an authentic voice. They came with their own questions, agendas, professional concerns and private experiences and this created a complex and open-ended learning situation in which they underwent significant experiences and engaged in deep conversations.

The next two chapters now turn to the research question, using the principles of the interpretive approach to structure the answers. This chapter addresses the first part: did the deployment of the interpretive approach improve the teachers' understanding of their religious and cultural communities? Most of the data for this analysis are taken from the summary sheets that the teachers completed which were based on the questions set out by Robert Jackson (2007a; 2008a, 317-9). The first two key concepts of representation and interpretation are covered in this chapter though it also includes elements of the third principle, reflexivity, namely, the teachers' critique of the materials studied and the methods of study that were employed.

Past experience and prior knowledge

There was no doubt that, at the beginning of the CPD project, the teachers had differing levels of knowledge and understanding of the religious and cultural communities from which their students came. This was true both in terms of levels of formal study and of personal experience, and the teachers knew this. One said, 'As a group we have variety of knowledge and experience of the Asian community' and he added a very important factor: 'We live at varying distances from [Northtown] which also affects our views' (RD 3). Since the interpretive approach involves oscillation between existing conceptual understanding and new ideas, the teachers' previous experiences are central to this interpretive process. The opening brainstorm exercise on each of the three CPD days showed very basic prior knowledge. For example, on the second CPD day, the group that was going to the mosque jotted down what they already knew about Islam. They wrote:

Sarah   Follow shariah law; based on Qur'an; started with Mohammad the prophet; life is sacred- life is a test; Day of Judgement; Mecca – the rock (i.e. the ka'ba) ; don't believe Jesus is the son of God; began because of tribal disagreements – way of uniting

Bob   Very prescriptive; seems to be similar to Old Testament in Christianity; English/British Islam more strict than Pakistan; changes at ne...? (Illegible)

| Ian | 5 pillars of faith; shared history – Judaism/Christianity; = peace – surrender to the will of Allah; second religion in terms of size after Christianity; |
| Annie | Shahadah; Mohammad is profit (sic); Ramadan; way of life too; men are better (higher) than women; religion of Muslims; 5 pillars of Islam … (illegible) follow; one God Allah; biggest/fastest growing religion in world. |

It could be argued, rightly, that this was a superficial exercise but it does give some indication of the rather low starting point from which they were coming, especially given that all of them had taught or were teaching RE in a school that is predominantly Pakistan-heritage.

What had the teachers learned?

The questionnaire began by giving the teachers the opportunity to set out what they had learned about religions and communities within Northtown that was new or different for them. These were deliberately open-ended questions.

Only one teacher gave a negative response to the first question: 'To be honest, not very much', but the others gave examples of their learning about each of the three religious groups they visited. On Sikhism there were comments about the proportion of Sikhs within the community, the divisions between Sikh groups and the experience of visiting a gurdwara. On Hinduism one person admitted knowing little before but 'now know enough to foster further interest', there were positive comments about

atmosphere and informality and the family-orientated nature of the temple. On Islam there were several comments about 'different viewpoints' and 'many interpretations', 'more flexibility' and 'increased awareness'. There were two comments in a more negative tone, one saying that the young are 'pulled in many directions' and 'they are taught without understanding why'. In summary, there were mainly positive responses to the question about religions and what they had learned but it was noticeable that there were more negative perceptions about Islam than the other two religions.

The answers to questions about communities were similar. One said that his experiences 'just confirmed' what he already knew. Positive responses included 'diverse and dynamic population', comments about the 'successful' women-only centre and 'greater understanding' of Islamic Relief, the Muslim charity. There were some comments that appeared neutral in tone, such as a reference to the 'melting pot' and a recognition that 'these areas have always been' thus. Another respondent referred to 'different values regarding key aspects of life' but made no comment on whether these were better or worse. There were too some negative responses: the Pakistani community 'not progressing forward' and 'members of the Asian community still faced profound problems'. It is perhaps worth noting the use of the phrase 'Asian community' in the last quotation: even though the teachers had shown (on the first evening's CPD) that they understood that the 'Asian community' was heterogeneous, they slipped into such terminology frequently, both orally and in writing. As Sardar notes, 'The generic Asian

exists only in the mind of Anglo-Saxon folk' (2009, 40).[1] It is inappropriate to speculate about why this is because the teachers offered no explanations but it is worth noting that they used forms of expression that over-simplified phenomena of which they actually had a deeper understanding. This appears comparable to their students' use of phrases such as 'back home' which they themselves had challenged. Common usage of speech and nuanced understanding did not always complement each other readily and stereotyping was always a danger.

The questionnaire then followed the key elements of the interpretive approach on representation and interpretation. The teachers' responses are now set out on: stereotypical or misrepresented views; internal diversity; understanding terms and concepts; empathy; the individual in relation to the group and the wider tradition; critical engagement; and reflection on the methods of study (Jackson, 2007a; 2008a, 317-9)

Stereotyping and misrepresentation

The first question under the theme of representation asked if the project had avoided stereotyping and misrepresentation. Four of the nine completed summary forms said yes, they had, and they gave the following examples:

> Yes - by meeting Muslims with different interpretations of their faith
>
> Yes- because of the variety of people/groups involved
>
> Yes, because I was shown various perspectives from the same community.

All of this is positive, though it was only a minority of the group that thought this. Of the remaining forms, one did not answer the question at all and one of the female teachers, Annie, said no to the question about stereotyping. Later in interview she withdrew the comment saying she had misunderstood the question. Her view, expressed in interview, was that:

> I think that I understood that as 'Have we as individuals, by doing this, stopped... stereotyping Pakistanis?' So my answer is no, I don't think we have. So that's perhaps how I've misinterpreted the question. When we look at it as in have we avoided stereotyping by having mixed views on that day then, yes, we did.

She is drawing an important distinction here: the way in which the CPD course was structured avoided the trap of stereotyping but that did not mean that the teachers did not hold (or continue to hold) stereotypical views. Annie clearly thought that they did and there were times when their comments substantiated her view. Another of the female teachers gave a negative response when she wrote, 'I still find the gender roles in Islam difficult - sadly the stereotype seems to fit'. Other answers were rather oblique: one wrote 'we went with an open mind' which seems to suggest that that is an antidote to stereotyping and is congruent with the IA's principles.

More than one teacher referred to the media when writing about the stereotyping of Islam whilst recognising the benefits of meeting members of communities which meant that people emerged as individuals to whom they could relate. Stereotyping, wrote one:

> Seems to emanate from media but in private individuals remain individuals with similar hopes and aspirations.

Another teacher, writing in her diary, said that the view of Islam in the media 'always seems to be more solid' whereas she now knows that there are 'differences within Islam' and adds that 'culture has moulded Islam to meet its needs' (RD 4). Jackson recognises that the media plays a significant role in the representation of religions (2008b, 193) - it proved to be so with some of these teachers. The evidence here is suggesting, therefore, that in the CPD course we had avoided stereotyping by enabling the teachers to talk to a variety of people who shared their own beliefs and attitudes. The teachers recognised that and approved of it but in itself it did not counteract existing stereotypes or prevent the use of generalising terminology.

Diversity

One of the statements that teachers made frequently was their increasing awareness of diversity within communities, as a consequence of the CPD project. In relation to representation, the summary form specifically asked if there had been 'sufficient attention to diversity within religions/communities'.

Again, there were four of the nine completed summary forms that said yes (though they were not the same four as in the previous question):

> Good to see two religions/communities represented but one day not long enough to understand them

> Yes- through the different group visits.

One of the teachers left the question unanswered and the rest made a variety of comments, which didn't really answer the question, such as:

> Tried to - but views of people we met were fairly entrenched.

Another recognised that this was not easy and wrote:

> Difficult to do that within a short time frame but each representative addressed the issue.

The subject of diversity also arose in the reflective diaries that four of the teachers kept. One of the male managers wrote about the interviews with the sixth form students saying:

> I was particularly struck by the diversity within the community, but positively encouraged by the value attached to being Muslim and British (RD 1).

Thus in a variety of contexts the teachers confirmed that, although they recognised these were difficult matters, the CPD sessions themselves had provided for a diversity of opinion and outlook to be presented and that they were surprised by the degree of diversity they found within all the communities. What was difficult to find evidence of, however, was any deeper understanding of diversity, how it manifested itself and any impact it had on the communities. So, at one level, most of the teachers

said they were more aware of diversity but at a deeper level they did not articulate what that meant.

Reflections on representation

In analysing the data from these days and the teachers' written responses, it is interesting to note that some of them reflect on the question of representation and its complexities. It is important to note that, during the CPD sessions, I rarely used the formal terminology that Jackson employs and it is therefore somewhat surprising that the teachers speak or write about it, and in a variety of contexts. First, there was some questioning of who is in a position to 'represent' a community. One teacher wrote:

> The husband & wife [Yasmin and Asif] were an example of fairly modern, m/c [middle class] educated Muslims, not really representative of the majority of our students.

The other Muslim woman they interviewed, the manager of the women's centre, was also middle class, educated and successful but there was no sense from the teachers that she 'represented' Muslim women. In some respects this is not at all surprising and indeed is factually accurate in that the majority of the minority ethnic population in Northtown is poor (see chapter 1) but it was as if the exceptions were largely irrelevant, rather than merely being a minority. Current public discourse on minority populations, particularly on Muslim communities, would appear to reinforce a largely negative and monolithic view.

There was a second area of understanding that emerged with regard to representation and that was the view that if they had gone to different people in different communities, they would have had different experiences:

> I think it would have been interesting to have had that range of experience and also to understand to some extent that you can have a very different experience within the same religion depending on which place you visit.

The teacher did not develop this view further but he is clearly working here with the whole question of representation and how outsiders can make sense of a community through access to individuals and their communities. Another teacher identified a related question when he recognised that the informants had been chosen because they were intelligent, interesting and experienced in talking about their religion to visitors from other communities. One wrote:

> The selection of the representatives was very significant as these people had much to say in an articulate and interesting way.

Had we chosen less informed or less articulate members of communities, their experiences would have been different but no less authentic.

In these ways some of the teachers were able to demonstrate awareness of the complexity of the representation of religions and of communities. It would appear that the teachers felt that they had been given a broad and balanced picture of religions in the community, that the diversity within and between religions and communities was shown and that

misrepresentation and stereotyping were avoided. There is also evidence that they were sensitive to and aware of the complex nature of some of the issues raised and the methods that had been employed but there is little in-depth understanding demonstrated by the teachers and no detailed evidence of increased knowledge.

Understanding terms and concepts

Another of the foci in the interpretive approach is an increased understanding of the terms and concepts that are encountered during visits to and conversations with community members. The question on the summary sheet designed to elicit information on this had two parts: 'How far did you understand the terms that were used? Are there concepts you need to unpack further?' Retrospectively, the question asked could have been phrased more simply and constituent parts divided more sharply.

If the teachers had increased their understanding of their communities, there would have been evidence of this in new or deeper understanding of terms and concepts but their answers provided very little. Of the nine completed forms, three were blank, three said 'no' (presumably in answer to the second part of the question) and only three comments were made (all from managers). One of them wanted to know more about Sikhism, having visited the *gurdwara.* Another senior manager, Clive, a sociologist, wrote:

> Definitely need to know more about 'politics' of the Islamic
>
> groups – their relationship to one another etc.'

The head of faculty and an RE specialist, wrote on his summary form that he wanted to know more about 'Sunni Muslim divisions regarding the Hanafi school of thought. E.g. braelvia (sic)/ Deobandi'. He expressed a desire to meet with people from each 'sect' or group, which is entirely congruent with the IA. In this, he is echoing what was said by the teachers at the end of the second CPD day. Nonetheless, when the summary forms were completed there was no mention of any of these (or similar) terms from those teachers and in the plenary session that took place back in school, no-one raised questions about or made reference to these or other concepts. Not only were the formal terms not used, there was no general discussion about key concepts or denominational groups.

It can be said therefore that there is little evidence of increased understanding of key concepts or a desire on the teachers' part for more. However, there was some evidence of the teachers' awareness of language and its use. In the interviews they conducted with the sixth form students, for example, they had challenged students on their use of the term 'back home'. Another example arose on the second CPD day when Tariq, one of the Muslim informants, used the phrase 'outside world' when referring to non-Muslim aspects of the community's life. One of the male teachers immediately challenged him and asked if it implied that the Muslim community had a closed view. Tariq replied that he had not meant to use it in 'a negative way', only in the sense that 'they're not Muslims'. Nonetheless, the teachers did not appear convinced and remained troubled by what they saw as Muslims

'separating themselves', to use Sarah's phrase from her diary (RD4). The conversation with Tariq can be viewed as evidence of the teachers' willingness to explore the language that was used by informants in an attempt to understand it. This is congruent with the IA and its emphasis on the exploration of meaning and can be seen as an example of what Geertz describes as:

> searching out and analysing the symbolic forms – words, images... – in terms of which... people actually represented themselves to themselves and to one another' (quoted in Jackson 1997, 35).

One of Jackson's key terms in the interpretation of concepts is oscillation (1997, 111).There was only one example of this in the data gathered from these summary forms, in the words of the head of faculty, a practising Christian, when he wrote:

> Islam is as diverse as Christianity with respect to interpretation of religious/cultural requirements.

He is here demonstrating a link made with his own tradition and experience in order to make sense of others' lives and beliefs. Perhaps this is as much as is possible in the relatively short time-scale and limited experiences that the teachers had during this project. The teachers became a little more aware of the relationship between the insiders' and their own use of language and concepts as they attempted to make sense of what they heard, saw and learned through the ethnographic process (33).

Empathy

Another of Jackson's key themes in the interpretive approach is that of empathy and he uses the term in a specific sense: it is the consequence and not the precursor of understanding. Jackson usefully differentiates between sensitivity which is a 'necessary but not sufficient cause' for understanding (1997, 24) and empathy which is only possible 'once the terms and symbols of another's discourse have been grasped' (2008a, 314).

When asked to comment on empathy on the summary sheets, at the end of the project, that is after a range of opportunities for developing understanding had taken place, the teachers' answers – like many of the above – were generally ambivalent. Two of the summary sheets were left with the question unanswered while four of the remaining seven teachers said that they were able to empathise with the people they met. They wrote comments such as: 'a great deal' or 'very much, they were very open and easy to relate to'. Some referred to named individuals with whom they had empathy. One, reflecting Jackson's understanding of empathy, wrote: 'very much because I understood them better'. Realistically, some of the staff said that empathy was not an easy matter:

> To some extent but religious views are difficult to empathise with if you're not religious.

Another wrote:

> It is always difficult to do this in a short time frame but I did understand their situation.

Overall, most were positive about their ability to empathise though it is also true that, at least some of them thought they were able to do that before the CPD began. For example, Annie, in her interview quoted a conversation with her students who said:

> 'Miss, you just understand' … I say, 'Well, I might just listen to what you say,' but they say, 'No, Miss, you don't, you actually find a way round it, you actually understand'.

There was also evidence from the questionnaire that the staff completed prior to their visits (based on the European-wide qualitative survey that was part of the REDCo Project) that their attitudes towards community cohesion and living in a multi-ethnic community were strongly positive. This is similar to the findings of McKenna *et al.* (2008, 104). Every one of the humanities teachers in my study said 'yes' to the question: 'Do you think that people from different religions can live in the same community?' One of them wrote:

> Yes – because most religions share the same ideas about family + community. More similarities than differences…

Another gave strong affirmation and linked it to his personal experience:

> It happens all the time at [School C] and in the wider community. I have nothing but positive encounters with students I meet in communities outside school and on mixed faith, culture trips.

There is evidence from the teachers of positive attitudes and a willingness to engage with their local communities but, if Jackson is right

and empathy is dependent on understanding, then there was little evidence in the data gathered of that.

The individual, the group and the tradition

The last of the key concepts relating to representation that the teachers were asked to comment on is the relationship between the individual, the group and the wider tradition (Jackson, 2000, 113; 2008a, 314) which links to Geertz on 'parts' and 'wholes' (Jackson, 1997, 37). What had they learned of the relationship between the three? When asked about this, none of the teachers' answers showed a grasp of the idea as set out in the IA, though it is important to admit, again, that during the CPD sessions formal instruction in the IA was not given so it is not surprising that the teachers' answers were either vague or on another topic. 'This was difficult to establish in some cases' was one comment. Most of the teachers interpreted the question by commenting on the amount of diversity they had observed which had clearly made a significant impact on them. 'Diversity across all the religious groups was great,' wrote one but that answer fails to grasp one of the fundamental tenets of the IA which was being sought here. One of the teachers, Bob, who tended towards negative responses, saw this as another example of 'conflicting views within the community dependent on which area you are from'. Nasima, the only Muslim respondent , wrote that it had 'cemented understanding of the differing factions within Muslim community', demonstrating that the approach was of benefit to people within as well as outside the tradition, while Annie said it 'helped me to understand why people of this religion behave like they do'.

In many respects these comments link the teachers to the position adopted by Cantwell Smith and which Jackson criticises (1997, 49).They appeared more comfortable with Smith's categories of 'faith' and 'tradition' rather than the IA's extended model that includes the 'group' which they found difficult to understand. Yet, when I interviewed the two faculty managers six months later they demonstrated insights into this question which impressed me. Reflecting on the processes and what the teachers had learned, the deputy faculty manager said:

David   Yeah. People got bits … A sort of snapshot of what they saw on their day… They deepened their knowledge of part, but they only deepened their knowledge of what they saw … You knew who she [Yasmin] was, you knew what she believed but you didn't really get a grasp of what other people in the community thought of her, for example.

Ian   And to what extent she represents a minority or a majority within the community.

David   And within her community and then within the wider community of Yorkshire Muslims. Where does she fit within that and where does [Northtown] fit within that - but that's such a difficult thing to do within, like you said, a short time frame and people came away understanding her as a person and perhaps not understanding the context and the community.

This is a highly significant conversation showing a great deal of insight and raising questions about the individual in relation to the group and

the tradition as a whole. The two managers recognised the need for much deeper understanding and contextualisation of the material with which they were presented. They also recognised that it would take more than a few evenings and a day of visits to enable that to happen in any meaningful way. They were clear in their final interview that this was, as the head of faculty put it, 'in essence, an initial process', a view substantiated by one of the teachers who wrote:

> Good to see two religions/communities represented but one day not long enough to understand them.

It seems that grasping the concept of the individual in the group within the wider tradition is very difficult, particularly in relation to cultural or religious communities that are different from one's own.

Constructive critique of materials studied at a distance

Although a constructive critique of materials is placed by Jackson in the reflexivity theme of his interpretive approach (2008b, 195), it seems more appropriate to address it here since it is inseparable from the teachers' engagement with and responses to the communities they are trying to understand.

The evidence would suggest that the teachers began this project with a generally positive attitude towards living and working in a multi-ethnic environment. They engaged sensitively towards the individuals and the communities they met but there was also considerable evidence of critical and sometimes negative engagement with the issues and the communities they encountered. There was, to use Ricoeur's terminology,

both a hermeneutic of suspicion and of faith: 'willingness to suspect, willingness to listen' (Ricoeur, 1970, quoted by Wright, 2003).

First, there was quite frequent criticism of the Pakistani-heritage communities expressed by some of the teachers and some of their informants. There was a general view, as we saw in chapter 3, that the 'community' (as the teachers often referred to the Pakistani-heritage communities) is living in a 'time warp' and that, while life in Pakistan has 'moved on', the community in Northtown remains more 'traditional'. When challenged by one of the teachers who pointed out that people return to Pakistan often, the white community development manager claimed that when they come home they 'complain about Pakistan' and say 'it's going downhill'. One of the teachers took up this theme in interview:

Annie   … but some people who've got parents who've lived in
            Pakistan, they come over here and they haven't moved on
            with the times so therefore they're bringing that little bit of
            Islam with them and that little bit of Pakistan but they're not
            actually moving on. Whereas when they go back for a visit
            to Pakistan, Pakistan's moved on and they haven't.

JM   And another time you said the kids are stuck in a time warp

Annie   Mmmm… They are.

Nasima, the Muslim teacher, added her voice to these criticisms, saying that she finds the community 'more restrictive now' [than when she was

growing up] and, with reference to lack of interest from Pakistani-heritage students to a proposed sixth form ball:

> To me it's those kind of things where they have no ambition or desire to want the bigger things in life or to enjoy the simple pleasures in life.

This view of a community wedded to an outdated culture, linked to social deprivation, with low levels of literacy and lack of English, combine to raise teachers' concerns about the community they are serving and the impact all this has on their students.

It is interesting to note that when teachers were given a completely free hand to write in their reflective diaries, a number of negative comments and anxieties emerged, more so than, say, in the interviews I conducted. Again, it is the Muslim community that is singled out. One of the middle managers, Ian, wrote about women 'refusing to put with negative marriages' and he saw this as a 'sign of impact of Western upbringing and education in a more liberal society' (RD 1). One of women teachers, Rosemary, wrote about being part of British culture:

> I find it really frustrating that there is a lack of any move towards integration which I feel is at the centre of the problem – my prejudice I'm afraid! … Hindus are more likely to integrate with and succeed in British society… I did not find it threatening as I sometimes do with aspects of Islam (RD 3).

The youngest member of the faculty became 'annoyed' and 'sad' about the separate sections in the mosque for women which she found 'demeaning':

> … I am sure I am imposing my western liberal values on them, but it left me feeling angry that if we segregated by race it would cause an outcry and yet to segregate by gender was somehow acceptable and justifiable (RD 4).

These comments raise a number of questions. One is about the teachers' stated presuppositions, 'prejudices' or principles, such as their commitment to gender equality. Jackson insists that presuppositions should not be bracketed out but should become part of the interpretive process. This however is difficult and it links to a closely related question on how to deal with what emerged from the teachers' critique of the materials, not least because it was often negative rather than constructive. O'Grady suggests that this is an issue for Jackson's interpretive approach saying that 'he has no strategy to monitor and respond' to 'the unexpected ideas and possibilities' that might arise (2007, 336) and that would appear to be true of this study also. One of the ways in which this may be addressed in relation to teachers' CPD is to place their critique in context and then to employ other disciplines to subject the critique to more careful analysis.

Critique in context

It is important to place the above in the broader context of both local and national discourse about Muslim communities, which Jackson

recognises (2008a, 311).This was a theme in one of my specialist studies which used Northtown as a case study and a brief overview was presented as context in chapter 1. There I noted some of the very negative images of Northtown and some academic challenges to them, though the latter rarely achieve the media attention they deserve.

Negative perceptions of Muslim communities create a difficult context for the teachers in School C, and similar situations. The teachers demonstrated strongly positive attitudes towards pluralism and racial and religious tolerance in the survey they completed for me but there is some dissonance between this and some of the negative views that they also expressed. These were rarely challenged. Indeed, as we have seen, they were reinforced by at least one of their informants. This creates a tension which needs to be explored further.

It needs to be recognised that the IA is not about forming conclusions about whole traditions and cultures. This CPD was not about minority ethnic groups generally within Northtown: it was about these individual people, in these contexts, as part of these traditions. These experiences impacted on teachers' perceptions of the 'whole' but different or additional elements would have had to be introduced into the CPD course if we were to engage in a broader critique of prevailing perceptions of communities. These additional elements would include some of the radical assessments of, say, the Ouseley and Cantle reports and discussion of the evidence amassed by Finney and Simpson (2009) to explode the 'myths' they believe create misunderstanding of segregation

and ghetto-isation. If more time had allowed, this could have had

significant impact on the teachers and their levels of understanding of

the communities, but such work would have taken them into different

disciplines: demographic analysis, textual analysis and engagement with

underlying bias and that was beyond the scope of this project.

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter address the first part of the research

question: did the deployment of the interpretive approach improve the

teachers' understanding of their religious and cultural communities?

The evidence gathered in this chapter was analysed using the first two

key concepts of the IA, representation and interpretation, to assess to

what extent the teachers' understanding had developed. The chapter

began by setting out the teachers' existing knowledge, their positive

attitudes towards social harmony and their willing participation in this

CPD project, in order to establish the base-line against which

judgements could be made.

In terms of stereotyping and misrepresentation, which Jackson seeks to

avoid through the IA, the teachers agreed that they had had a broad and

balanced experience and that the CPD had avoided both, mainly through

the variety of people and places they had experienced. Nonetheless, the

point was made that stereotyping and generalisation continued. They still

tended to refer to 'the Asian community' or to 'Muslims' as if they were

homogeneous entities. This appeared to be part of a tendency to revert

to the language of common discourse. The teachers said that they were now much more aware of diversity and they were generally very positive about it though, again, there was a general rather than a detailed understanding of the diversity they experienced.

There was little formal evidence of engagement by the teachers with concepts or terminology that were new and little desire to explore them in any greater depth - either what Geertz terms experience 'near' or 'distant' (Jackson, 1997, 34). There was evidence of language being explored, such as 'outside world', but formal terminology held little relevance for the teachers. Some of this seems to link to their purpose in participation: they were not there to study the communities in an academic sense nor were they participating in an RE curriculum project.[2] They were there to work more effectively with their communities, especially with regard to the school's bid to gain specialist humanities status.

Their understanding of the individual in relation to the group and the whole tradition remained at a low level; they were, it seemed, more interested in a generalised understanding and they appeared closer to Cantwell Smith's position than Jackson's. They could understand the concept of the 'tradition' and of individual's 'faith' but they demonstrated little understanding of the 'group'. The teachers were generally positive about their increased empathy but Jackson's view is that empathy emanates from understanding, and there was little evidence of that.

There was also evidence of what might be termed a 'negative' rather than a 'constructive' critique of the communities they studied.

Time was a major issue. The project was relatively short and, as all of the teachers who were interviewed confirmed, there was a need for more time and opportunity to explore these questions further. Nonetheless, the teachers were very positive about the CPD, they thought that all staff in the school should experience it and they would say that their understanding of their communities had increased, even if that is difficult to demonstrate using the strict criteria of the interpretive approach.

The next chapter now addresses the remaining two parts of the research question, about the ways in which the IA impacted on the teachers' personal edification and professional practice both of which relate to reflexivity, the third strand of the IA. These joint aspects of reflexivity are taken here to correspond to the REDCo understanding of 'transforming society' – the ways, if any, in which these teachers were transformed and will transform their work and thus the lives and experiences of their students within their faculty and the school as a whole.

End-notes

[1] Here Sardar is quoting Tahir Abbas, from the University of Birmingham.

[2] This is similar to O'Grady's findings with pupils. He found that religious concepts were not powerful in their own right but only when they addressed pupils' life worlds. This is true of these teachers and their professional issues.

Chapter 6

The impact of the CPD programme on the teachers' personal edification and professional practice.

In chapter 5, the first part of the research question was addressed: the teachers' understanding of their religious and cultural communities. It was answered mainly using data gathered in relation to the first two strands of Jackson's interpretive approach (IA): representation and interpretation. It also included one aspect of reflexivity, namely, a constructive critique of what is being studied (2008b, 195).This chapter now turns to the two remaining parts of the third strand of the interpretive approach, reflexivity, though the separation of reflexivity and interpretation is difficult in practice (ibid). Edification is the first of these, by which Jackson means personal growth through new understanding (194). The research question divides this into two sections: the teachers' personal edification and their professional practice. The chapter ends with a review of the methods of study, the last part of Jackson's reflexivity (195) as part of the evaluation of the deployment of the transferability of the interpretive approach to teachers' CPD.

Personal edification

On their summary form, the teachers were asked four questions which focused on reflexivity and which were largely based on Jackson's

questions on the IA, set out for the REDCo Project (2007a; 2008a, 317-9):

- What, if anything, have you found that is a common/shared experience with the people you've met today?

- What, if anything is different and has made you reflect on your own ideas?

- In what ways, if any, will there be impact from the day on your professional work?

- In what ways, if any, has there been impact on you personally?

Other data were gathered from the teachers' questionnaires, the four reflective diaries and the interviews with three of the teachers, followed by an interview with the faculty managers, as well as my field notes.

In answer to the specific questions set out above the teachers were able to identify areas of personal edification which are coherent with Jackson's. First, most of the teachers said that they could identify common or shared experience with the communities they studied though three gave no response. These shared experiences could be divided into a number of categories:

- some were about 'universals', such as 'people's aspirations and fears appear to be very similar'

- some were about young people, such as 'parents do not understand young people'

- some were about the community as a whole, such as 'many of the people we met had a real interest in improving the future of [Northtown]'.

All of these were positive, if rather general and brief, responses.

Other respondents to the same question raised further questions that were troubling them. Nasima wrote about the 'glass ceiling' that Asians experience. Bob shifted the topic to one that was an important professional concern for him: 'How is disaffected youth going to be approached and worked with effectively?' This reflects one of the concerns to which the teachers returned many times in their conversations with each other and with their respondents. It is one of several instances when staff were given a question which was designed to elicit a personal response but to which they gave a professional answer. This will be discussed further below.

The parallel question was what, if anything, was different and had made them reflect on their own ideas. These two questions (what is shared and what is different) were juxtaposed but most of the teachers did not seem to see them as a pair and they gave a very wide variety of responses to the second question which I found impossible to categorise. Retrospectively, it would seem that the questions were not sufficiently clear. Four of the forms gave no answer at all to this question. Annie answered the question but re-interpreted it to take up the theme of 'difference'

> The difference between young female Muslim living in today's
> world and western society compared to the traditional old
> fashioned, set in their ways male Asian.

This answer gives a series of contrasts: female/male; modern/old fashioned; Muslim/Asian and clearly she prefers the first in each set of contrasts. A similar response commented:

> Pakistanis tend to turn into parents rather than leave the community and bring new ideas to it... Students need positive role models who have left the community and broadened it.

This confirms some of the views discussed earlier in this study and it also provides another example, in the second part of the answer, of a teacher giving a professional perspective on what was meant to be a personal question. There were other similar responses such as 'the need to represent diversity', referring to classroom practice and the teaching of RE. Nasima's answer appears to combine both the professional and personal:

> My own knowledge base about why our students believe some of the things they do is not secure. I would like to understand this and then be able to present facts of the situation to them [her underlining].

She has found views among the students that are different from her own, she doesn't like them and she clearly has a very strong desire to challenge her students and their thinking. This is rather an oblique answer to the question: she isn't explaining precisely what she has found during the CPD course that is 'different' and that has made her 'reflect on her own ideas' but clearly the dialogue that took place has brought this to the fore in her own thinking and she expresses the need to learn more. It is interesting that this view is expressed by the only Asian

teacher on the staff when she is the one from whom insider information was often sought.

Teachers were also asked to comment specifically on personal impact. One form was left blank, two said 'none' and only three answered the question directly. Nasima was interested in Islamic Relief, having met one of its workers on her CPD day, and wanted to become involved. One commented on the value of time for reflection 'which is very unusual' in busy teachers' lives. Another wrote that the day 'allowed us to look at the lives of our neighbours and see the different but similar values they hold', a statement which links back to both interpretation and the finding of shared experience. But overall, there was relatively little evidence of personal edification given by the teachers when they were asked to do so.

There were two other responses that require comment. One referred first to the 'useful' experience which helped him to understand the pupils' background and then he went on to talk of:

> …the potential clash of counter values between my cultural experience and that of the students.

The second talked of being 'quite disturbed' by the conversation on extremism. There are issues for both of these teachers that require further unpacking, not necessarily to find a resolution because that may not be possible, but to enable deeper engagement on matters that are causing discomfort if not 'conflict' in the REDCo sense. The comment about 'counter values' is another example of the way in which teachers'

own presuppositions and experience impact on their ability to relate to others who are different from themselves, a topic to which we shall return.

In the final interview with the head and deputy head of faculty I asked about changes in staff attitudes, values or beliefs and told them that I had gathered relatively little data to analyse. They confirmed that view and offered some explanations:

David   I think you're right perhaps and that's to do with the time … and the deepness of what people actually saw. If you see a snapshot of something then you can look at that from the surface and as a professional you can say I can do this but to really change an opinion or a view you need a much deeper understanding of what you're actually looking at…

Ian   I think attitudinal change is a very, very slow process… but I think probably attitudinal change is more likely to occur by increasing the number of our staff as a whole who are coming more from those communities because to be honest the major point of engagement is going to be with the people with whom you are working and I think that has got, that has got much more potential for longer term attitudinal change…

David   To really change attitudes we'd have to have done that process again and again and again. It's that drip – drip – drip – drip - alongside all the other factors.

There is clear recognition from these two managers, interviewed several months after the programme had been completed, that one of the key

issues was that of time to engage in depth with some of the issues and the recognition that day-to-day engagement with people from minority ethnic communities was key to long-term change. This programme was judged to be successful but only in so far as it was part of a process and, at that point, it was an incomplete process.

The data given above on personal edification are thus rather limited and mixed. There is no doubt that the teachers enjoyed and benefited in some ways from the CPD programme but there is little evidence of significant personal change or 'transformation'. In the majority of instances, the question is transmuted into a professional issue and this is not at all surprising. The teachers were there as part of their working life, with their colleagues, in a professional development situation. In another Warwick University research study, there were similar conclusions (McKenna *et al.,* 2008, 66). This is therefore an area for further enquiry into the transferability of the IA to adults and possible differences between pedagogy and andragogy.

Professional benefits

Most of the data on professional benefits from the CPD course came from the teachers' answers to one specific question on the summary form: 'In what ways, if any, will there be an impact from the day on you professional work?' Only one teacher gave a negative response saying, 'I'm not convinced I gained much that will help me in this' but the others offered a variety of interesting and relevant responses. Their answers can be divided into four main categories: awareness of diversity;

understanding the students' backgrounds; changing practice; and increasing confidence to challenge students. But data gathered from other sources were also relevant, some providing illustrative evidence to substantiate these answers while others moved into another area, that of the school's specialist status bid, which therefore forms a fifth category.

Awareness of diversity

One of the key themes that engaged the teachers, which was reported in relation to the first CPD day in chapter 4, was 'diversity within diversity'. The summary forms the teachers completed substantiated the view that their increased understanding of diversity was a significant professional benefit for them. There were several statements about increased understanding of the diversity of the students' backgrounds. One teacher said this would help 'avoid treating all as if they are the same' while the head of faculty wrote an *aide-memoire* to himself:

> Remember to reflect the diversity of attitude within Islam in
> discussion and debate in class – show students that I am
> <u>aware</u> of it [his underlining].

It is worth noting his wording here. He refers to diversity **of attitude** and this reflects the teachers' experiences on their CPD days and their conversations with Muslims who held a variety of opinions and attitudes. As we have seen, the teachers' formal knowledge of the different groups within the local communities, such as the Deobandi and the Wahhabi, remained insecure but in a more general sense the teachers now knew that religions were not monolithic entities and this is one of the aims of

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the interpretive approach (Jackson, 1997, 49; 2000, 133). They had now seen and heard this for themselves. David, the deputy head of faculty, summed this up saying that the CPD had 'widened people's horizons... opened their eyes'. The head of faculty used the same metaphor:

> ...quite an eye opener really and I'm saying that as someone who thought he knew quite a lot about the background of our Muslim students. When you actually go in and you begin to realise the complexity and the diversity that there is there within the community as well and that was actually very, very helpful.

This is a positive outcome in terms of the impact of the CPD on their understanding and as such it forms part of a stronger basis from which they can work, both with their students and the communities from which they come.

Understanding the students' backgrounds

The second group of responses on the summary forms were about the teachers' increased understanding of the students and the backgrounds from which they come:

> I can understand where the kids are coming from with regards to their home life.
>
> Understand young Muslims confusion re Islam and who they are or what they belong to.
>
> Understand relationship between student and parent.

In the preparatory discussions with the managers before the CPD began, they made reference to the fact that staff live at a distance from the

school which affects their knowledge and experience of their school community. As Ian pointed out in his interview the CPD sessions had given them experiences they had not had previously and, in themselves, these were beneficial:

> I think that that was a very positive aspect that the staff had the opportunity to get out and actually go into parts of the community, physically, from which many of our students are drawn or where their families are located which previously many of them have never done. .. to actually make some sort of a connection, for some of them **itself,** was a complete first and, and, very valuable…

At the beginning of the CPD sessions one of the terms that I had introduced to the teachers was 'skilled cultural navigator'. Borrowed from Ballard (1994), it was used as an aspirational term in Northtown's community cohesion strategy that everyone working in education would become more confident and competent in cultural and intercultural navigation – teachers and others would be able to enter communities and engage in dialogue with those that were different from themselves. The term had rarely been used since then, the teachers did not adopt it and I was generally careful to avoid formal terminology. In the final interview with the faculty managers, then, I was rather surprised when the following conversation took place:

David   I don't think they got the idea of, you know, navigating cultures - whatever we called it.

Ian   'Skilled cultural navigators'.

David   Yeah, I don't think some people got that idea.

JM   Do you think they became more confident in dealing with

           people from different communities?

David   **Yes. I do.**

The managers were emphatic that this was an area of significantly

increased professional competence and confidence and as such this

provides some direct evidence in relation to the research question:

teachers' knowledge and understanding of their communities and their

relationship with them have improved. Nonetheless, these are rather

unspecific improvements that are difficult to quantify. Were there areas

where there was more observable change?

Changing practice

The third group of answers on the summary sheet provided evidence of

possible ways of changing and improving classroom practice. It is

important to state that these forms were completed as soon as the CPD

was over and they are therefore intentions rather than actions but they

are still significant. Nasima was interested in the way in which Islamic

Relief could be used in school, another wanted to bring local providers

into school, another to establish links with what is already being done

and one wanted to use 'positive role models'. In the interviews which

were conducted at the beginning of the following term, Nasima told me

in answer to an open question about the impact of the CPD that she had

already taken action:

 Nasima   I think it's got to be something that is carried on ... **I** know

           that one of the things **I've** done with my year group is

actually organise through the [local resource centre] for the gifted and talented students exactly what we did, a trip out into the community… So, they're going to a mosque, a church and they're either going to a temple or a synagogue because I want that to carry on… What I'd **really** like to see come out of it … is every student would get the opportunity to go out into the community and visit places of faith.

This is potentially a significant change in practice with benefits for the students and their experiences of their local communities.[1] It also means that the philosophy that underpinned the CPD is now beginning to be transferred to the curriculum.

When the faculty managers were interviewed six months later there was also a conversation about curriculum development, specifically in relation to history and citizenship but generally in the context of the changing secondary curriculum. Referring to the initiative by Sir Keith Ajegbo, David said the school now intended to participate in *Who do we think we are? week.* He added:

Hopefully that is something that our students want, they are really interested in this idea of who they are.

They also talked about the increased confidence with which the humanities teachers were now able to work with other colleagues from different faculties. David drew a direct link between the CPD programme and staff confidence in interview:

> I think it's enabled collaboration... when we go in to speak to English [department] to say what they feel and to discuss things which they might not have done...

There was thus evidence from the teachers that there had been an increase in their professional confidence as a direct result of their participation in the CPD course and this manifested itself in another specific way - the difficult issue of challenging students and their attitudes and behaviour.

Increased confidence to challenge

The fourth group of responses on the summary forms related directly to what happens in school and how the teachers deal with sensitive and controversial issues. One wrote that she now has 'more confidence in breaking down stereotypes'. Another said that he would 'feel happier about challenging misconceptions by young Muslims', while another said, 'Be able to point out cultural problems without facing charges of racism'. Being accused of racism was the subject of a long conversation in the final plenary session. My notes record the following exchange:

HT   We should challenge them confidently but we don't want to in case we appear to be racist.

Bob   I know I've backed off in this school

Rosemary   The kids are quick to play the race card.

It was made obvious by the teachers on a number of occasions that they were reluctant to challenge students in case they were accused of racism. In her interview, Annie spent a very long time explaining to me

what had happened during an altercation with a student when he accused her of racism. Nasima also raised the topic, voicing her anxiety:

Nasima   It concerns me that people… em… are almost frightened to challenge the kids.

JM   There was a lot about that, their reluctance to challenge racism.

Nasima   Yeah, kids take advantage of it… I think we **do** need to empower the staff in some way so that they don't feel scared. .. It's almost like they [the pupils] they've got the power and they know it and they **can** play the race card if they chose to but we mustn't shy away from it. We must challenge them… all the way because we are right. And I feel sorry for staff that can't do that.

It would be inaccurate to state that the CPD course had resolved this problem for staff but Annie made it clear in her interview that her experiences, along with her own knowledge of ethnic minority communities, had given her greater confidence in dealing with this:

I actually have the confidence to speak out and talk to them about it now… from what we did on that day that I am quite confident and comfortable to talk about it.

Referring to her students and their views and attitudes, she said:

I mean, for me personally and professionally it **has** given me more understanding of them and how they work and why they do what they do do - I just like to take it with a pinch of salt now because I know that they probably don't know either…

There is an interesting range of ideas here from Annie: increased understanding and confidence emerge strongly but there is a recognition that her students don't know as much as she thought they did and that she can now join in conversations in her business studies classes 'not just about their race or religion…' but also '…legal, social and ethical issues'. Increasing confidence and awareness are clearly demonstrated here.

The interview with the head and deputy head of faculty, six months later, provided further evidence that the staff had become more confident in dealing with controversial issues. In the context of their quality management of teaching and learning the head of faculty said:

Ian   We go in and watch staff teaching and I certainly feel … that staff have a got a little bit more self confidence in dealing with controversial issues within lessons.

Ian   Within the RE lessons… because they've actually talked about some of those issues with adults in the community and they feel they can actually respond in a more confident way, to show - to have a more informed understanding of the debate.

David   And just being able to tackle controversial issues … have the confidence to think, well, I **can** do this. There is nothing stopping from me talking about the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Holocaust and I can go down these paths and I know that what some of the children might be saying is not what all of

the community **is** saying. There are differences. I think that's been a…

Ian　　　　And I think it's also good for the students to realise that the staff, by the very nature of the dialogue, they know that the staff have actually …begun to go beyond that and say, well, what are the attitudes within the local communities to this and to show that we're sometimes aware of things like the tensions that there are within different groups within the community, about issues associated with terrorism, for example, post 9/11 and 7/7, and not to be scared of talking about it in lessons which we're not.

What is of particular interest here is that the faculty managers are saying that the humanities teachers are now more aware of the diversity of opinion within the communities in Northtown. They are recognising that there is no such thing as a 'Muslim' view or a 'Sikh' view and that it is not only acceptable but necessary for them to challenge students' thinking. That is one of the roles of all teachers in all situations and it would appear that this CPD course has empowered these teachers to fulfil that professional duty. Their personal experience of dialogue and engagement with a range of voices from within the local communities has effected significant change.

The school's community bid

The fifth and final area in which there was evidence of professional development was the benefits of the CPD course to the school's attempt to become a specialist humanities college. A member of staff confirmed

the view that the teachers found this useful. Writing after one of the preparatory sessions in his diary, he said:

> There was strong agreement that this process would be very helpful in implementing our specialist schools plan (RD 2).

At the end of the first CPD session, another wrote that it was 'good to work together in practical way to focus on need to develop better community involvement'. The teachers took advantage of various opportunities, including their interviews with students and they had plenty of ideas, as Rosemary noted in her reflective diary. Under her own heading of 'linking with the school community' she took the trouble to list their many suggestions. The teachers on the second CPD day came up with a list of eleven actions that they now wanted to develop in school. There was recognition from the deputy head of faculty that the visits to communities and their conversations with community leaders had had a significant impact. In his words: 'opportunities like this were invaluable' (RD 2).

Nonetheless, I was surprised when I interviewed the faculty managers six month later to realise just how significant those opportunities had been for them:

David   From my perspective what it did for us was blow completely open the community aspect of our bid and I think what it demonstrated to me that the people who had written the bid … they had written it from their perspective on what they thought the community should have and that was very well meaning … and when we actually got into the communities I

think we soon realised that what they wanted and what we were prepared to offer initially were very different.

JM   So what we did could be viewed as a sort of preliminary needs analysis and gave you different ideas?

David   Absolutely. Our Head and deputy in charge now have decided to take a very different view on the community aspect of the bid.

Actual experience of engaging with the communities thus had a major impact, not just on the teachers who participated in the course but also on the senior managers of the school, even though their personal involvement was limited.

There is thus considerable evidence that the CPD course, based on the interpretive approach, provided significant professional development for teachers. Throughout the CPD course, their interest was always in how what they were doing would impact on the school, their pupils and their relationships with the communities. This is similar to the findings of the evaluation of Julia Ipgrave's *Building E-bridges* Project. McKenna *et al.* in their evaluative study of that project highlight a number of points about teachers as researchers that are also relevant to the teachers with whom I worked (McKenna *et al.,* 2008, 217). First they note that the teachers were not involved in detailed discussions of the principles and purposes of the project. The decisions about my work with the humanities faculty staff were made by the school's managers overall and with the faculty managers on specifics. Although the staff were given considerable power over the agendas for each day and choices about where they went, the

overall structure and purpose were not of their making. Second, their comments were recorded as data rather than challenged and this led to lack of critical engagement with some of the issues that arose and also with the prevailing discourse of the time. The discussion in chapter 5 pointed to some of the radical analyses being undertaken by academics on demographics and social policy - such as Finney and Simpson (2009); Alam and Husband (2006); Flint and Robinson (2008) - that challenge many of the prevailing assumptions about, for example, segregation or the primacy given to ethnicity and religion rather than to multiple social deprivation. More opportunities for engagement with such analyses would have enabled the teachers to deepen their responses to the evidence that was presented to them and to be more critical of their own and others' presuppositions. It is, however, unrealistic to suppose that busy teachers are going to find more time to address such issues for themselves which is why the school's future commitment to and methods of working with its communities are crucial. The third point made by McKenna *et al*. is that a more sustained preparation enabling a deeper understanding of the theoretical foundations might have been beneficial and I would say that that is true of this project also. I was reluctant to engage the teachers in theory and I fear now that this has limited their responses. Had I, for example, shared with them something on Jackson's ideas on edification, then there might have been the opportunity to be more explicit and to stimulate the teachers into further consideration of it. Nonetheless, they had something else in common with the teachers in Ipgrave's project, for they too valued 'encounter with, and raising awareness of, difference and diversity... [and] to hear from 'insiders'

about their practices and beliefs and the experience of internal diversity of religions' (McKenna *et al.*, 2008, 71).

What was different in this study from McKenna *et al.*'s, is the tentative suggestion, made in chapter 3, that these teachers formed a 'community of practice'. This was not a concept that was either introduced to them or raised by them, but there was a very strong sense of their identity as a team, working on a joint project, outside their normal professional practice but an extension of it. It seemed to me that their activities were analogous to mine. It may be, therefore, that their participation in a 'community of practice' is part of the explanation for the relative lack of evidence of personal edification. However, the community of practice was neither formally ascribed nor self-ascribed to this group and it would therefore feel disingenuous to propose it as an explanation. It does not emerge from the data and while it forms, for me, an interesting comparison between my work and theirs, to make this a major feature of the conclusion would be unacceptable, both logically and ethically.

Reviewing methods of study

One of the elements of reflexivity that Jackson emphasises ((2008a, 315) is reviewing methods of study and some data emerged to enable an analysis of this. The aims of the CPD sessions were achieved mainly through dialogue, both relatively formal semi-structured interviews and less formal conversation, often while visiting community and religious centres as participant observers. One of the main conversations that made a significant impact was the opportunity to talk to their students:

An excellent insight was gained into the community lives of

some of our mature, reflective and positive post-16 students'

(RD 1).

I actually found talking to the students very, very interesting

as well. I would have liked that session to have continued…

(Annie, interview).

Annie also recognised the need for there to be trust between the

interviewers and the interviewees, one of the pre-requisites of effective

ethnographic research:

because I think the amount of time that we had with them,

they needed to build up a trust as into what they dare actually

say, what they felt comfortable to say… but I was also totally

amazed at the three different responses from the three

individual students.

It was not only discussion with informants that was found to be useful:

the teachers also benefited from having time to discuss issues with each

other. Clive, one of the senior managers, confirmed this and drew

attention to the benefits of having a female Muslim member of staff with

whom they could talk:

The discussions have been very useful… For me, having the

opportunity to step back and listen and, you know, to what

colleagues are saying is always useful but talking to [Nasima]

was quite useful because… it was the first time I've heard her

talk quite so openly about her feelings about Islam.

While from her perspective:

Not all departments would have an Asian member of staff

that they could continuously harass [laughter] which, I mean,

I don't mind but I think it was useful for them but it's letting

them know there are actually people you can go and find in

school if you want to ask them something.

The teachers, both in writing and in conversation made it very clear that they liked the methods of study that had been employed and that they had given them significant insights into the communities.

Presuppositions and principles

One of the issues that Jackson identifies as problematic in traditional phenomenological approaches to the study of religions is the requirement that one should 'bracket out' one's presuppositions (1997, 21). He recognises, rightly, that this creates difficulties and the teachers too saw that this was problematic. Reflecting on some male Muslim attitudes towards women led Sarah to write:

Whether this was true or not I am not sure and I am sure I

am imposing my western liberal views on them, but it left me

feeling angry… (RD 4).

For some of the women teachers, in particular, there were issues of principle about the place of women in society and they were going not to bracket them out. Before her visit to the mosque, Rosemary questioned whether it would improve her knowledge of the community. This is:

... probably because I feel that Asian women do not get much of a say through their religion therefore I want to talk to them in other contexts' (RD 3).[2]

In other words, she had a pre-existent view which affected her judgement of what she thought would happen. At the end, she wrote that the place of women remained 'a problem' for her. Although their main female Muslim informant insisted on 'complementarity' between men and women in Islam as evidence of their equality, the teachers remained unconvinced and unable to move from their own understanding of gender equality to other perceptions of it.

What Jackson has proposed instead of 'bracketing out' is what he calls 'oscillation' or the 'backwards and forwards movement' (2006, 401) as teachers move between their own understanding and experiences and what they are now seeing and experiencing. There was some evidence of this, though relatively little. One example has already been quoted in chapter 5 from the teachers' summary forms. Annie was able to draw on her considerable experience of having Muslim friends and colleagues to be able to compare them with the primarily Pakistani-heritage community with which she was working in school and this made her more critical of the latter but it also enabled her to say in interview, 'I think I understand more'. Nasima contrasted her upbringing with those of her students which led her to conclude that a key and neglected issue was one of social class. But, on the whole there was little evidence of 'oscillation'.

One possible reason for this is that in what was a short CPD course, albeit spread over quite a long period, there was insufficient time to revisit or engage in further dialogue as one would in a classroom of pupils where there might be weeks or months devoted to the study of a topic and the build up of skills and understanding over their school careers. With these teachers, there remained a need for further opportunities to engage in dialogue and engagement if they were to continue to develop their understanding of and relationship with their local communities. That is not to infer that everyone should finally agree: disagreement has to be an acceptable outcome in an open-ended process.

Overall impressions of the CPD programme

Finally, it is worth noting the general feedback on the CPD programme the teachers' views on the course and its value for them overall. Despite the complexity of the issues and the plethora of interpretations and views the staff faced, the CPD sessions were very well received by them. They were enthusiastic and responsive in all the sessions and worked very well together and with me. This is congruent with the comments in the school's report from Investors in People 2007: 'Staff are very supportive of each other' and I agree with the words of the head of faculty: 'Staff worked with enthusiasm, individually and collectively' (RD 1).

There was no doubt from both their written and spoken comments that the CPD programme had been of value. For some, it was their first

opportunity to enter community centres and places of worship, to

observe rituals taking place and to meet a variety of community leaders.

It gave them opportunities to engage in dialogue with others and

between themselves on issues relating to their school's communities. All

of the teachers who were interviewed made it very clear that they had

benefited and they all agreed that this CPD programme should be made

available to all the other faculties in the school. The following quotation

is typical:

> I had an excellent day meeting with key players in the
>
> community and visiting the places listed (RD1).

But it would also be true to say that not everyone benefited equally and

when asked in the final interview if the programme could have been

made clearer for staff the deputy head of faculty replied:

David   Yeah, I think it could. I think there were some people who

really didn't get what we were doing… I think about 30% of

people didn't really understand what they were meant to be

getting out of the process and that actually it was something

that would help them in the classroom and in the school to

become better communicators with the students…

The teachers were also aware of issues. In the following quotation, the

youngest teacher commented on the value it has had for her but

reflected on the impact it appeared to have had on the others. Writing in

her diary, Sarah said:

> I was really impressed with how much I learned on the visit
>
> out into the community and it made things much clearer in my

own mind, although it seemed to have the opposite effect on

others (RD 4).

In interview, Annie gave some indication of what Sarah meant – she

pointed out that it is part of a process and that understanding more

leads to the need for further investigations:

I'm really pleased because... a lot of things were cleared up

and I have a lot more understanding now but once you, sort

of, get satisfied with your questions being answered, you then

start looking at other things, so... although some things were

cleared up for me some other things weren't.

Comments such as these are entirely congruent with the interpretive

approach and the need to go on reflecting and engaging with the

material and experiences.

Judging the quality of a CPD programme on the basis of its own

theoretical foundation may be questioned and therefore I looked for a set

of objective criteria for substantiating evidence of the claims being made

here. The Training and Development Authority (TDA) which has

responsibility for teacher training in England has identified twelve

changes that might be seen in staff as a result of effective continuing

professional development.[3] Of these, I believe that this study has

provided evidence of change in at least the following eight areas:

- changes in confidence and self-esteem
- changes in their (or colleagues') classroom practice
- improved reflection on practice

- more confidence in managing and influencing colleagues

- motivation

- greater willingness, and ability, to contribute to debate in staff meetings

- greater ability to question alternative viewpoints

- more confidence in advocating and defending their claims to new knowledge

The TDA's criteria are congruent with Knowles' work on what he has termed 'andragogy' and the six assumptions that should underpin adult learning.[4] These include 'readiness', that is that adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate relevance to their work and 'orientation', that adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented. For these teachers, the professional problems that they perceived in relation to their communities were the 'motivation' (another of Knowles' assumptions) for their involvement in this project which leads to their 'need to know' - the reason for learning something. The teachers were not interested in the details of religions and communities but in the 'experience' they would have which would improve their professional expertise and the work of their school.[5] The evidence gathered in this study is thus in keeping with Knowles' description of effective adult learning and point to the success, overall, of the CPD project for the teachers.

The head of faculty summed up its value for the participants and for the school as a whole when he said in interview:

I think the school as a whole would have definitely benefited from the opportunity to have engaged directly by going into the communities from which our students come. I think you can't really replicate in any way other than by going and doing it and it's expensive but I think it does have big spin-offs. I still think it's been valuable to do what we've done within the faculty and I think we can **still** have an impact on the school through the work we have done already and we can continue to develop that work.

Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed the data available to answer the second two parts of the research question: the teachers' personal edification and their professional practice, both aspects of what Jackson calls 'reflexivity', the third strand of his interpretive approach. The data have demonstrated that in relation to the teachers' personal edification there was little if any change that they could identify in their personal views and beliefs, even though they engaged frequently and in some depth with questions of belief and meaning. Indeed, they invariably transformed the question about personal development into one about their professional development. This is not surprising since they were participating in this project as professionals, with an aim of improving their understanding of and relationship with their local communities. In this, the project was at least partially successful - the deployment of the interpretive approach enabled the teachers to develop a greater understanding of diversity, especially diversity of opinion and belief,

within their communities. Their experience of visiting the communities and engaging in dialogue with community leaders gave them greater understanding of their students and their backgrounds. There was some evidence of changing professional practice and increased confidence to deal with controversial and complex questions in the classroom and to challenge their students with less fear of being branded racist. It is also important to note that even though the teachers did not identify and articulate formal evidence of edification, the previous chapters (3 and 4) that recorded their responses showed that the CPD project did stimulate discussion of a range of complex and sensitive issues and concepts. These included questions of religious truth, the interpretation and authority of religious texts, as well as matters of social and cultural significance such as the place of women in society. Their dialogical engagement with these issues, among themselves and with their informants, is evidence of reflection on and analysis of the communities, beliefs and opinions they encountered. From the managers' perspective, particularly, there was also evidence that the CPD had changed the school's approach to the community aspect of their bid to become a specialist status college. All of these benefits are evidence that the interpretive approach can be taken and used with teachers to enhance their professional development.

The key finding of this research therefore is that the interpretive approach can be deployed successfully with teachers and that it effected positive change in their professional competence and confidence.

End-notes

[1] It will also help the school to meet the recommendations of the local agreed syllabus for religious education that all pupils in all phases of their education should have the opportunity to visit places of worship. The government, through its Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto, is also encouraging this.

[2] The other contexts were provided and all of the teachers were able to meet at least one Asian woman and engage in a long conversation where they had control of the agenda.

[3] http://www.tda.gov.uk/teachers/continuingprofessionaldevelopment/cpdleadership/evaluate_impact/how_to/staff_impact.aspx

[4] http://www.infed.org/lifelonglearning/b-andra.htm

[5] Knowles' final assumption was that adults need to be responsible and involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning experiences, what he calls 'self-concept'. This happened, to some extent, in this project but in many respects the agenda was set by the school senior management decision to bid for specialist status and its requirement of community involvement.

Chapter 7

Transferability and impact: conclusions

This qualitative, practitioner research study has addressed the question of the transferability and impact of Jackson's interpretive approach (IA) to religious education in relation to teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). It was conducted within a community of practice as part of the REDCo Project and was located in a mixed comprehensive school which faces challenging circumstances in one of the northern towns where riots took place at the beginning of the decade. Working with teachers in the humanities faculty, the research question had three elements:

1. The teachers' understanding of the school's religious and cultural communities
2. Their personal edification
3. Their professional practice

The overall conclusion to this study is that the IA was successfully transferred to teachers' CPD even though the outcomes were different from what the IA predicts and the impact in the three areas being researched was not equal. There are three main reasons for claiming this success. First, the process, which was constructed according to the IA, enabled positive outcomes for the teachers. They developed greater confidence and professional expertise as a consequence. Second, their awareness of the diversity of their communities was greatly enhanced

and this is due to the way in which the CPD programme took the IA's understanding of representation and applied it to them. This confirms - at least part of -the theoretical basis of the programme. Third, the evidence gathered showed that not only did the teachers enjoy and believe that they had benefited from the CPD programme, they also believed that all staff in every faculty should have the opportunity to participate in it. This is a significant endorsement of the project and of the transferability of the IA to teachers' CPD.

The process

The CPD programme was constructed on the principles of Jackson's IA – representation, interpretation and reflexivity (Jackson 2004; 2008a and b). In relation to representation it avoided the reification of religions and communities and it enabled teachers to experience their internal diversity; it avoided stereotyping; it did not require them to 'bracket out' their presuppositions. All of this was achieved by enabling the teachers to have a breadth of experience through dialogue with individuals in a variety of community and religious contexts. This dialogical approach was key to the process of interpretation, giving teachers the opportunity to explore meaning and concepts though, as we have seen, there was limited evidence that teachers were interested in what Jackson calls 'the grammar' of religions (1997, 24). Nonetheless, they engaged in a range of serious conversations on questions of ultimate significance including, for example, the interpretation of sacred texts. Jackson's breakdown of his term 'reflexivity' includes edification, constructive critical engagement

with what has been studied and a review of the methods that have been employed. There was some evidence for each of these though, again, the impact was differential and raises questions about both the approach and its deployment in an adult learning context.

In order to develop the teachers' understanding of their local communities we visited three places of worship – a *gurdwara,* a mosque and a *mandir* - and three community centres, one of which was for women only. The teachers conducted a semi-structured interview with their own sixth form Pakistani-heritage students and engaged in dialogue with a range of community leaders in a variety of contexts.

It is important to note that this research study was not located only within religious communities: engagement with cultural communities was of equal significance. The same epistemological basis was shared in our approach to both: religions and cultures are seen as dynamic, changing and organic. Culture, like religion, is 'internally diverse' and 'actively contested' (Jackson, 1997, 81). The teachers visited as many cultural and community centres as they did religious centres and this joint focus of their engagement marks a significant development in deploying and testing the interpretive approach.

The teachers' understanding of religious and cultural communities

One of the key ways in which the teachers said their understanding of communities was increased by this project was in relation to diversity. They believed that they developed a deeper awareness of diversity, although their knowledge of different groups within religious and ethnic communities remained basic. They were introduced to a number of formal terms and concepts with which most of them were unfamiliar and yet they showed little desire to explore them further. For example, the divisions within the Sunni community of Northtown - who followed the Hanafite school or who the Barelvis were and what was different about the Deobandis- were of only passing interest to the teachers. Nonetheless, they all insisted that diversity was important and that they now knew and understood more, though it might be more accurate to differentiate between increased awareness and increased understanding. In this respect they succeeded, at least to some extent, in 'bridging' their communities (CLG 2007a, 14; 2008, 26).

There was also evidence that what was more important for at least some of the teachers was that diversity was not about different groups within religions and communities but rather the diversity of opinion and belief that they found. This emerged in their conversations with their informants, for example, about the interpretation of the Qur'an and the place of women within Islam. Some of them found these conversations very frustrating and wanted to know 'the truth' – a simple, accurate and

authoritative answer – but the IA emphasises the internal diversity and ambiguity of religions and the teachers had deliberately been introduced to variety within communities. In their visits and conversations the teachers were using basic ethnographic methods to elicit from their informants the meanings that they gave to their beliefs and practices but they also wanted the answers to give them the 'truth' so that they had a firm foundation on which to base decisions back at school. This tension between 'meaning' and 'truth' proved to be very difficult for some of the teachers. Nonetheless they now knew for themselves that religions and communities are not monolithic and, whilst this led to some confusion and discomfort, it also provided valuable insights for them, leading to greater professional confidence, according to the faculty managers, in their dealings with individual students. The teachers now knew that diversity within religions and communities is both significant and extensive and this I judge to be a positive outcome of the deployment of the IA to teachers' CPD.

Stereotyping

The teachers believed that the project had successfully avoided misrepresenting and stereotyping communities, one of Jackson's key ideas on representation (2008a, 313-4). They believed that the way in which this had been achieved was by providing a wide range of experiences for them. This links closely to their conviction that they had had experience of diversity and thus, for them, avoiding stereotyping and exposure to diversity were two aspects of the same phenomenon. It

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would not be true, however, to say that there was evidence that teachers' own stereotypes had been fundamentally challenged. There was still a tendency for the teachers, at the end of the project, to use homogenising terms such as 'Asian' or Muslims' and while this may be merely slippage into the nomenclature of public discourse, it also links to some of the negative judgements that the teachers expressed.

One example of this can be seen in some of their responses to the place of women in Pakistani-heritage society. Many of the teachers had strongly-held views about gender equality and these were matters of moral and social principle for them. They formed some of the 'presuppositions' that they brought with them and the IA does not require that they should attempt to 'bracket out' such views. They need, according to Jackson (2000, 133-4) to be part of the engagement because they are determinants of the participants' responses to and relationships with the individuals and communities they encountered. There was, however, no evidence that there had been any meaningful exploration of other perspectives on equality, such as Yasmin's insistence on the complementarity of roles. Such arguments were rejected by the teachers. This is not to suggest that the outcome would or should have been a change in their principles, but there was no hint that a different approach to equality could be legitimate.

It would require the trainer leading the CPD project to enable further exploration, through asking questions, providing academic and other

critiques of national discourse and encouraging a fuller debate to explore their attitudes and presuppositions further (e.g. Shaffi (2009) on Muslim women). This raises the question of the role of trainer when combined with that of the researcher and, retrospectively, there were times when the research role precluded a more proactive and challenging training role on my part. This also links to the tension that existed between my agenda, as researching the deployment of the IA, and the teachers' agenda of improving their relationships with their communities. The processes we were engaged in were often on parallel lines but they did not always connect.

Teachers' understanding of concepts

As pointed out above, there was little evidence that the teachers' understanding of concepts was noticeably enhanced. There was little engagement by them with formal terminology, particularly formal religious terminology. This is not dissimilar to the findings of O'Grady's research on RE and motivation which found that, for his students, concepts were only significant when they addressed their 'life worlds' (2007, 339). In the case of these teachers, their interest was their professional 'life worlds'. They demonstrated little increased understanding of the 'grammar' of religions or cultures to which Jackson gives significance (1997, 129).

This may have been partly because I deliberately avoided using formal terminology but, even when their informants used terms and concepts of

which most of them had no understanding, there was rarely a desire for further investigation of those concepts. In their written summaries, on the summary forms they completed and in their reflective diaries, they demonstrated little change in their conceptual understanding. There was little evidence of the 'oscillation' to which Jackson refers (200, 134) or the use of 'experience near' to help interpret or make meaning of 'experience distant' concepts, terminology adopted by Jackson from Clifford Geertz (1997, 34).

Nonetheless, during their conversations with each other during the CPD days they did engage with some difficult concepts, directly connected with what their informants were saying and which also had professional resonance for them. For example, they explored questions of what was 'true' in relation to what the Qur'an said about the wearing of the hijab and this was placed, by the teachers, in opposition to what cultural norms required. As teachers, they wanted to understand what was required by religious authority because then they would respect it. If it were 'only cultural' then they would not. This giving of primacy to religion over culture is an interesting phenomenon and it relates back to the question of authority and, to some extent, the reification of religion. Many of the teachers wanted one 'true' answer to a complex question in order that they could confidently deal with that issue back in school, whilst still respecting religious beliefs and traditions.

Truth and interpretation

This question of what is 'true' resonates with issues that have arisen in recent years in debate between academics promoting different pedagogical approaches to religious education. The IA is not relativistic Jackson says. He claims epistemological openness and whilst his approach assumes that some knowledge is socially constructed, it does not deny the possibility of ultimate truth (1997, 126; 2000, 133). Rather it explores the ways in which individuals, within their groups and traditions construct meaning and live out their beliefs in daily life (Jackson, 2008b, 193). But the teachers were hearing statements of 'ultimate truth' that were not unanimously agreed upon by their informants: they found that difficult and wanted to alleviate that tension.

This links with the possibility of conflict, not just between different worldviews but in a broader sense of personal philosophical discomfort with the material being explored. This is one of the themes of the REDCo Project where conflict was considered alongside dialogue (Jackson and O'Grady, 2007, 195). Although conflict and dialogue are often seen as opposites, Bertram-Troost *et al.* point to their dialectic relationship (2008, 405): conflict can act as a stimulus for dialogue rather than simply being seen in tension to it and the teachers gave ample evidence of this. For some of them, the 'failure' to reach a satisfactory conclusion remained problematic but it also formed a motivation for them to continue to engage in dialogue on this complex and difficult question. In the context of this CPD project truth and accuracy were often conflated.

The teachers were not interested in 'ultimate truth' that might challenge or affirm their own beliefs but rather they wanted to acquire accurate information on which they could then base professional decisions.

Issues arising in relation to the deployment of the interpretive approach

In addition to the lack of development of conceptual understanding, there are two main issues that arose during this study in relation to the deployment of the IA with teachers, the first of which is Jackson's notion of the 'group'. One of his fundamental principles is the danger of generalising about cultural or religious 'wholes' (1997, 49) and he introduces instead the three-fold perspective of the individual adherent, within a group, as part of a wider tradition (1997, 65-6; 2008a, 314). In this, Jackson takes issue with the approach set out by Cantwell Smith and his use of 'faith' and 'tradition' (1978). In fact, the teachers were, in many respects, more comfortable and familiar with Smith's categories of 'faith' and 'tradition' than the extended model that Jackson provides. For him, it is about parts and wholes and how they relate to each other, a position much influenced by Geertz (Jackson, 1997, 37). The teachers found it very difficult to see how the individuals they met related to the groups they represented, mainly because of their lack of knowledge of the religious and social differences between and within those groups. The teachers were unable to contextualise what they were learning. They struggled with how far their informants were 'representative' of their communities, partly in relation to age, social class and education, but

also in how far they were accurately representing their 'group' and where that group sat in relation to other groups and to the tradition as a whole.

This question is one that could have been discussed further with the teachers and, had there been a second iteration of the study then the 'group' would have been a focus. In the context of this project, the 'group' is largely understood as different schools of thought within Islam that are present in Northtown, such as the Wahhabi and Deobandi, and which influence the lives and beliefs of its young people and, therefore, the school's pupils. To a lesser extent, it also refers to the different ethnic and national groups and the teachers' understanding of Pakistani, Afghan, Bangladeshi, Indian and other communities that make up Northtown's Muslim community, as well as its Sikh, Hindu and other minorities.

Jackson may well be right to insist on the significance of the group but it was difficult to enable an understanding in practice and for this to happen would require further work and the testing of a range of strategies. Such a CPD programme would have to include more opportunities to understand the history and development of the religions and communities they visited. Had there been another iteration of the CPD programme and another research cycle then this might have been possible though the evidence from this study would suggest that it was beyond what the teachers would have considered relevant to their

professional development. This remains an issue in the deployment of the IA in CPD.

Constructive critique of materials studied

The second key concept from the IA that proved to be problematic is one of Jackson's three elements of reflexivity – a constructive critique of materials studied (2000, 134).The evidence gathered in this study suggests that, rather than engaging 'a constructive critique', there was a tendency by some to engage in a critique that was generally negative and this raises issues about both the CPD model that was developed and the IA.

The model of the IA deployed in this project relied on teachers engaging with informant(s) from communities and with each other as they explored the religious and ethnic communities they serve in their school. This dialogical model seemed sufficient at the planning stage and there were many opportunities for open dialogue with and between those involved. But what happened to a considerable extent was that the teachers and some of their informants engaged in a negative critique that included propounding stereotypical views. This was seen in relation to some tradition-based behaviours and mores within the Pakistani-heritage community, in particular, and a tendency to characterise groups by 'their most unstable features' (Jackson 1997, 81).

This is not to say that there are not issues and problems within the Pakistani-heritage communities in Northtown: there are drug and crime related problems; there is poverty and deprivation; there are questions about the continuation of consanguineous marriages with sub-continental partners resulting, not least, in limited use of English across generations. But such generalised, negative assumptions about whole communities deny the social and familial strengths within the communities and the rapid rate of change which is taking place and they risk pathologizing communities when the focus could, perhaps should, be on alleviating social deprivation, increasing employment opportunities and raising standards in schools. An informed critique of negative public discourse I now consider to be an essential element of increased understanding of communities, and this did not happen in this instance.

Based on the evidence from this study, there would appear to be a need to develop the interpretive approach and its dialogical methods further by including other voices in the form of, say, academics and their critiques of issues, policy and discourse and analysis of statistical data. The use of such approaches has to be integral to the deployment of the IA if teachers are to develop an informed and constructive critique of the materials with which they are engaging. In other words, the hermeneutic circle needs to be more populated.

Reflexivity

Chapter 2 on methodology set out the questions that were asked of the teachers, based on Jackson (2007a; 2008a, 317-9) and designed to elicit evidence of personal development, or edification, one of the three areas that Jackson identifies within his reflexivity strand (2000, 134).The questions asked about shared or common experience with the people they had met and they were asked if they had found anything that was different and which had caused them to reflect. In the teachers' answers and in their reflective diaries there was little evidence of the personal edification that Jackson sees as intrinsic to his approach which he admits teachers cannot guarantee will happen (2008b, 195). There was no evidence of 'transformation', one of the key concepts in the title of the REDCo Project. Nonetheless, within other data generated by this study, there is some evidence of teachers' personal development, particularly in the evidence offered in chapters 3 and 4 where their responses to their CPD experience are recorded. It is clear that they engaged with questions of religion and belief and that they reflected on a number of difficult issues: the 'truth' of religious texts and how to interpret them; the relationship between religion and culture; identity; community; the place of women in society and so on. All of these are significant issues and they impact on teachers' own beliefs, values and attitudes. The fact that few of them wrote anything down when asked is perhaps a reflection of the difficulty of both identifying and articulating such matters, as other writers and researchers have suggested. Hay (1987), for example, found that adults had difficulty in articulating personal

religious or spiritual experiences while Gent (2002) says that teachers do not have the language to articulate how they promote children's spiritual development, despite their success in doing so. The evidence presented in chapters 3 and 4 can be interpreted as evidence of reflection and engagement with ultimate questions which I would suggest is a form of edification and personal development.

One of the ways in which personal development could have been enhanced within this project would have been for me, as the trainer, to take a more active role in enabling what Jackson calls the 'to-ing and fro-ing', the oscillation between the teachers' own views and those they were encountering and providing more structured opportunities for deeper reflection (Jackson, 2008b, 195). Ways of enabling oscillation could have been trialled in a second iteration of the CPD project, had this taken place. Another possibility might have been to give more guided reflection on edification from what had been learned, rather than the open-ended reflections which they presented and discussed among themselves, with me as the researcher/observer rather than the leader. Again, the joint role of the trainer/researcher becomes problematic.[i] The question of the teachers' personal development through their experience of the IA is an area which would benefit from further research.

Professional development

The evidence presented in this study has shown that while there was little formal evidence of teachers' personal edification, there was

considerable impact on them as professionals. O'Grady quotes Altrichter's view that the researcher must look for is the 'total effect of his or her interventions' (Ipgrave and O'Grady, 2009, 168) and the total effect of this CPD project was positive. The teachers who participated believed that they had developed a better understanding of their students and their backgrounds and thus one of their key aims of breaching the gap between them and their communities had been achieved. They had become more confident 'cultural navigators' (Ballard, 1994). They could deal more effectively with complex issues in the classroom and challenge their students. There was a noticeable impact on school's specialist status programme in relation to both its priorities and the approaches it adopted. Teachers' confidence in relation to their peers was also increased. Not least, the teachers knew that a number of the activities in which they had engaged, both on the CPD days out of school and during the twilight sessions, had modelled good practice and some of those ideas were then adopted and transferred to their classrooms. All of this shows that the interpretive approach can be transferred effectively and successfully to teachers. Their endorsement of their experiences being of value to them and their conviction that the programme should be made available to all their colleagues was further evidence of the success of the project.

Changes to the CPD programme.

A number of possible changes to the CPD programme have already been indicated including: introducing expert and radical voices to the

hermeneutic circle to enable deeper conversations and a constructive critique; the trainer being more pro-active in challenging the teachers' discourse; the trainer facilitating dialogue on edification so that the teachers had opportunities to articulate their responses in a deeper and more considered fashion; the provision of greater support in dealing with questions of truth and meaning as well as the history and development of religions and communities. This would mean that the IA not only informed the philosophy that underpinned the programme and the structure that was developed from it, but would be a stronger determinant of the process.

A very significant change would relate to that of time and duration. The teachers needed more time to visit communities and to engage in dialogue with informants if their understanding were to increase and the application of their learning were to have more impact. The faculty managers believed that the CPD should be more concentrated and not spread out over such a long period. My view is that, whilst this is true, understanding of communities needs to be a central aspect of a school's duty to promote community cohesion and that it must be built into long-term planning and training for all staff. This is not just true for schools serving minority ethnic populations. There is also the question of the timing of the CPD sessions, at the end of long school days, when weary teachers were asked to respond to complex matters and complete rather difficult questionnaires.

More time would also have given the teachers greater opportunity to be involved in the design of the programme, giving them a greater sense of ownership (one of the key aspects of andragogical learning),[ii] and simultaneously giving them a deeper understanding of the process and the methods of study they were using (Jackson, 2008b, 194). They would then, I believe, have gained more from it. Such negotiation may well have had to occur at different stages so that, as their knowledge and understanding increased, they were more able to determine the next set of experiences they believed would enhance their professional (and perhaps their personal) development.

Further research

There are several areas for further research which arise from the present study's findings. The first is the application of the interpretive approach to RE specialist teachers' CPD to see if there are differences in both process and outcomes, especially in relation to conceptual understanding and a constructive critique of what is being studied. Whilst it is the case that all of the humanities teachers in this study either teach or have taught RE, they were not participating because of that. Their agenda was very much about the school's relationship with its communities and the teachers' desire to improve this, particularly in the context of their bid to become a humanities specialist college with its community based requirements.

The second area would be to evaluate a CPD course that included from the outset a range of academic disciplines to support the deployment of the interpretive approach and to evaluate the impact of doing this on teachers' perceptions. This would have the purpose of enabling the constructive critique of materials that is integral to Jackson's approach.

The third area of research is already planned. As part of the data gathering process for this project, I took advantage of the concurrent research project on pupil perspectives which formed a key part of the REDCo Project across eight European countries. Pupils from School C participated in that and the results are reported in Ipgrave and McKenna (2008). Having used only a slightly amended version of the same questionnaire with their teachers, I now have the opportunity to compare and contrast teacher and pupil beliefs and attitudes about religion and religious education.

The transferability of the interpretive approach to teachers' CPD
In conclusion, I would argue that the interpretive approach can be successfully applied to teachers' CPD and that it can continue to be developed in the ways that have been set out above. This study has thus provided evidence of a new and original deployment of the interpretive approach in relation to community and religious groups and has enabled a critique of it in the context of teachers' professional development. It has been shown that the three strands of the IA were not of equal significance for the teachers nor as criteria for judging the success of the

CPD training. The teachers' professional benefits offer sufficient evidence of the appropriateness of the IA as a methodology that can be applied to their CPD, even though some of its key concepts, such as personal edification or deeper understanding of the 'grammar' of religions and cultures, were not as evident as one might have expected. It could be argued that it was the ethnographic methods, rather than the IA itself, which led to the success of the project but that would introduce a false dichotomy. The principles and the process of the CPD programme cannot be separated from each other since together they formed a carefully structured and coherent package.

I would argue from the evidence generated in this study, and particularly from that offered in chapter 6, that the IA could be widely used to promote teachers' contributions to schools' duty in relation to community cohesion and to the addressing of sensitive and controversial issues in their classrooms. In this respect, this research conclusion is both 'generalizable' in that it can offer something of value to other education settings (Ipgrave and O'Grady, 2009, 160) and timely given the current emphasis on community cohesion.

End-notes

[i] This is similar to O'Grady's observations about the roles of teacher/researcher (2009,20)

[ii] See http://tip.psychology.org/knowles.html

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Glossary

1. Abbreviations

BME   Black and Minority Ethnic

CLG   Communities and Local Government

CPD   Continuing Professional Development

DCLG   Department of Communities and Local Government

DCSF   Department of Children, Schools and Families

DfES   Department for Education and Skills

EAL   English as an Additional Language

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

IA   Interpretive Approach

ISB   Islamic Society of Britain

LA   Local Authority

LGA   Local Government Association

'NT'   'Northtown' (postcode)

OSCE   Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

RD   Reflective Diary

RE   Religious Education

REDCo	Religion in Education: A contribution to dialogue or a factor of conflict in transforming societies of European countries
RS	Religious Studies
SEF	Self-Evaluation Form
TDA	Training and Development Agency for schools
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility

2. Non-English terms

Aarti (Hindi)	offering of light during Hindu *puja*
burqa (Arabic)	outer garment worn by some Muslim women
gurdwara (Panjabi)	(lit) gateway of the guru; building for Sikh worship
hijab (Arabic)	headdress worn by some Muslim women
kafir (Arabic)	unbeliever
langar (Panjabi)	Communal food at a gurdwara
madrasa (Arabic)	a school but usually used to describe classes conducted in mosques
mandir (Sanskrit)	Hindu temple

nasiha (Arabic)　　　　　one who gives valuable advice; name of

　　　　　　　　　　　　citizenship project developed for madrasas

niqab (Arabic)　　　　　veil that coves the face

puja (Sanskrit)　　　　　worship, respect, homage

umma (Arabic)　　　　　people; world-wide community of Islam

Appendix 1
Community Cohesion Strategy

This is the Community Cohesion Strategy for [Northtown] to enable staff to promote community cohesion through their work. The Strategy will be written into the *Race Equality Action Plan* and monitored through the Race Equality Steering Group. In the next phase of its development, the Cohesion Strategy will be incorporated into [Northtown]'s team plans. The Cohesion Strategy is being shared with schools and other stakeholders but is intended for internal [Northtown] use. Further work will be developed, in collaboration with schools, to enable a full implementation of both the Inclusion and Cohesion Strategies.

Introduction:

'Community cohesion' is a complex area which is covered by a number of terms, often used synonymously: inclusion, cohesion, social cohesion, community cohesion, equality, equalities. In this document we use the term community cohesion as a sub-set of [Northtown]'s ***Inclusion Strategy*** and to encompass equality, diversity and cohesion. It is thus inseparable from race equality and incorporates a commitment to anti-racism as well as to mutli-culturalism. This will be achieved through a variety of strategies, not least the full implementation of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and firm action to eliminate racism(s), including institutional racism.

The term 'community cohesion' is employed using Cantle's definition, adopted by the Home Office, and used as the basis for its ***Community Cohesion Standards for Schools***. This Home Office document has already been circulated to all schools.

This strategy focuses on the processes involved in promoting community cohesion rather than defining the outcomes for schools and [Northtown] because it is the process that is fundamental to the development of, not just a community cohesion strategy, but a cohesive community.

There are two key concepts in this strategy which are inextricably linked - **identity** and **community**. Identity is not fixed, it can change and develop, it is multi-faceted and different aspects of identity are not hierarchical since we prioritise different aspects of our identity in different contexts. All of us have multiple identities which we define in terms of key areas of our lives and experiences. The key factors that define our identity also form our identification of the range of communities to which we belong. This identification is not simply cognitive: belonging to a community is seen in affective terms for we give allegiance and loyalty and imbue our community and our place within it with meaning and significance. There are communities within communities and a complex interplay exists between them. We possess multiple identities and live and work within multiple communities. In a cohesive community the complexities of identity and community will be identified and understood and there will be a willingness to engage with 'the other'.

The defining factors of identity and community include:

- Ethnicity – which is often understood in terms of shared descent and culture but it is a complex and much disputed concept. It is not simply applicable to minority ethnic groups.
- Nationality
- Colour
- Language
- Region
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Religion – a relatively recent academic concept which encompasses faith and tradition and is more complex than our simplistic division into six major religions. Many others also exist and there are no clear dividing lines between different 'religions' for they overlap and interplay in a wide variety of ways. There is also wide diversity within religions and we should be wary of homogenising them.

- Worldview - which encompasses philosophical and political life stances and other non-religious world views.
- Culture – another complex term which links to 'heritage' but also to expressions of cultural traditions through rituals and the arts.
- Socio-economic status
- Occupation
- Special needs
- Leisure and recreation
- Family role(s)   …   and others.

   Our aim is that everyone involved in education will have the confidence to become 'skilled cultural navigators', aware of their own identities and communities, and willing to engage with openness and empathy with the identity (ies) and community (ies) of others.

   This strategy has been developed to stand in relation to a range of other key documents and strategies. These include:

- [Northtown]'s *Strategic Plan*, *Education Development Plan*, *Multi-lingualism Policy* and *Inclusion Strategy*,
- DfES *Every Child Matters*
- Ofsted Self Evaluation Forms for schools
- Home Office Community *Cohesion Education Standards for Schools*
- The Learning and Skills Council's *Equality and Diversity Strategy 2004-7*
- [Northtown] MDC's *Corporate Plan, 2002-5, Combating Racism Framework* and *Race Equality Scheme 2002-5*
- [Northtown]'s *Community Cohesion Delivery Plan*
- Commission for Racial Equality *Learning for All.*

The Home Office definition of a cohesive community is one that has four key characteristics:

1.   there is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities
2.   the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and

positively valued

3.   those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities

4.   strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

We have taken each of these defining characteristics and from them created four priorities for educational communities – [Northtown], schools and other providers of learning experiences – so that they can promote community cohesion and challenge racism, prejudice and discrimination through their work. Each of them links with [Northtown]'s *Inclusion Strategy:*

Community Cohesion Priority	Inclusion Strategy Priority	Inclusion Strategy theme
1	5	Participation
2	2 and 6	Presence
3	2 and 6	Achievement
4	5 and 6	Participation

Priority 1: To create a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities

A common vision and sense of belonging will be created and articulated through a shared process in which members of the educational community will participate. Its key components will be dialogue and participation which will result in a deepening understanding of identity/ies and community/ies, and in the creation of new areas for enquiry, engagement, in an on-going process of learning and change. Assimilationism (in which the powerful majority demands that minorities

become the same as them) will be rejected in favour of positive pluralism (in which there is an embracing of the benefits of living in a plural, multi-ethnic society). Cultural dissonance (a sense of discomfort arising from cultural differences) will be replaced with an awareness of commonality and a respect for difference. This will not result in indiscriminating tolerance but will recognise that different standpoints may lead to non-agreement and thus will preserve the integrity of individual's principles.

This will be done through:

- Creating space and opportunity for dialogue between members of different communities, based on respect and dignity, which will be at the heart of this process so that everyone can take part as equals
- Creating opportunities, through team training, to share reflections and interpretations, to abandon presuppositions, which can preclude learning, and to engage with that which is different
- Facilitating the involvement of individuals and communities
- Promoting participation at a range of levels including communication, consultation, decision making and governance.

Priority 2: To appreciate and value positively the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances

This will necessitate learning about and learning from the range of communities that make up ***'s diverse population. It will enable everyone involved in education – pupils, teachers, support staff, governors, parents and the wider community – to become 'skilled cultural navigators', a phrase which was used originally of the young and their ability to move between different cultures, but one which is equally applicable to all of us. Aware of our own multiple identities, we will be comfortable in our relationships and confident in our ability to interact with communities that are different from our own.

This will be done through:

- Creating a learning ethos in all educational communities in which openness, sensitivity and respect enable engagement and involvement
- Providing 'safe spaces' and training so that adults have confidence and competence to approach issues with sensitivity and courage
- Facilitating the development of vocabulary, skills and attitudes to promote discourse between different peoples and communities
- Celebrating diversity through inclusive events
- Ensuring that the curriculum enables a critical understanding and appreciation of diversity
- Developing systems for rigorous impact assessment and consequent development and change.

Priority 3: To ensure that those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities

This refers to everyone who is a member of the educational community, so that there is fairness and opportunity for all. There will be a recognition and utilization of the strengths that lie within ***'s communities. Through the creative involvement of all stakeholders, the skills and talents of the whole community will be further developed. This will help enable informed choices to improve the quality of educational experiences and narrow the attainment gap, removing barriers to access, participation, progression, attainment and achievement. Community cohesion will be 'mainstreamed' and accepted as the responsibility of all.

This will be done through:
- Providing opportunities for full participation, in both formal and informal learning contexts, in order to enhance life opportunities
- Raising aspirations and educational expectations of professionals, children and young people, parents and communities
- Implementing the RRAA in [Northtown] and in schools
- Monitoring the impact of policy and practice on attainment, advancement and promotion
- Using Race Equality Policies and the assessment of their impact to ensure that momentum to promote similar life opportunities will be sustained

- Collaborating with other relevant partners to promote life chances
- Developing links and mutual understanding between supplementary and mainstream schools
- Supporting deeper understanding and effective implementation of [Northtown]'s *Multi-lingualism Policy*.

Priority 4: To help develop strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

This will entail firm commitment of all members of all educational communities to promote good relationships across communities through a range of strategies. It will also entail ensuring that discrimination, injustice, racism and a denial of human rights will be addressed effectively. Schools will, as far as possible, reflect the demographic patterns within the District to enhance community cohesion and prevent further social and ethnic polarisation.

This will be done through:
- Creating opportunities for good role models from diverse communities to have prominent positions within the community
- Promoting an exchange of skills and experiences between education staff and community members
- Increasing opportunities and support for parental involvement and collaboration
- Building on the *Schools Linking Project,* to develop a linking strategy which enables different educational communities to work together in extra/curricular activities and in a variety of settings
- Enabling children, young people and adults to share their stories, experiences and skills and to learn from one another
- Developing increased opportunities for children and young people to be more active within their communities to empower them and to effect social change
- Challenging negative stereotypes of [Northtown] and some of its communities

- Ensuring that clear and effective systems are in place to address harassment and discrimination, including training for all
- Promoting collective responsibility on admissions procedures to address the increasing polarisation of our communities.

Appendix 2

Community Cohesion CPD/Research Project

Questionnaire for Humanities Faculty Staff

Male   Female   (Please circle)

Age   20-35   35-45   45-60   60+   (Please circle)

Role   Main scale   TLR1   TLR2   SLT   (Please circle)

Religion/denomination (if any)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Country of birth

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………

Nationality

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………

Languages spoken at home

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………

Last year, the following questions were asked of some of your year 11 students by a researcher from the University of Warwick. I would like you to answer the same questions so that the two sets of data can be compared. This should give insight into the similarities and differences in world views between some teachers and some of your students at **** School. Thank you for your co-operation.

1. If you hear the words a) Religion and   b) God what comes to your mind?

- Please write down 3 to 6 words which you feel relevant for 'religion'

- Please write down 3 to 6 words which you feel relevant for 'God'

- How important is religion/God for your personal life? Can you write down a sentence (or more) which could illustrate your position?

2. How did you get to know about religions?

Please circle one or several of the following possibilities:

Family   friends   media   places of worship

<mark>School</mark>   <mark>College/university</mark> Other (please specify)

3. Do you talk about religion with your friends <mark>and family?</mark>

If no, why not. Please explain

If yes, what is interesting in talking about religion? On what sorts of occasions do you have such conversations?

4. **What are your experiences with your own religion and with the religions of others?**

   Could you write down examples of good and/or bad experiences?

5. **Do you think that people from different religions can live <mark>in the same community?</mark>**

   Please explain what you think and give examples, where possible.

6. **Should there be a place for religion at school?** Please explain why or why not.

7. **If religion is taught at school, what should pupils learn about?**

Please give at least three ideas.

8. **Please write down your opinion on the following questions:**

a) Should teachers have a religious faith?

b) Should all pupils be taught together, irrespective of differences in belief or world views? Or should pupils be separated when it comes to religion at school? Please give your opinion and explain it.

9. **Is there anything else you want to say on religion and its significance?**

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Joyce Miller

Appendix 3.

Summary form: CPD day.

Humanities Faculty

Day of Visit: 5/ 14 / 22 November. [Please circle appropriate date]

1. **What did you learn about religions in Bradford that was new/different from your previous perspectives?**

2. **What did you learn about communities in Bradford that was new/different from your previous perspectives**

3. **How far did you understand/ translate the terms that were used? Are there concepts you need to unpack further?**

4. **What did you learn about the relationship between the individuals you met today in relation to the group(s) to which they belong and to the religion/tradition as a whole?**

5. How far were you able to empathise with the people you met?

6. Have we avoided stereotyping and misrepresenting religions and communities? If yes, how did we do it?

7. Did we give sufficient attention to diversity within the religions/communities?

8. What have you learned about the relationship between religion and culture from today?

9. What, if anything, have you found that is a common /shared experience with the people you've met today?

10. What, if anything, have you found that is different and that has made you reflect on your own ideas?

11. In what ways, if any, will there be impact from the day on your professional work? Please list them.

12. In what ways, if any, has there been impact on you personally? Please explain as fully as possible.

13. Is there anything about the day that has caused you any conflict/ discomfort? Please specify.

14. Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you for completing this. Please return to Mick Walker or Joyce Miller.

Appendix 4

Student Details: REDCo Project.

Name	
Age	
Year in school	E.g. 12/13
Gender	
Post Code	
Subjects/courses Studying	E.g. A level
Religion	
Ethnicity	
Languages spoken	
Languages read	
Supplementary school or madrassah attended?	When? Where? For how long?
Identity/ies	I see myself as a…
Community/communities	I belong to…

Thank you.

Joyce Miller
University of Warwick
REDCo project.

Appendix 5

Guidance for conversations/ interviews with students

Aim: To deepen knowledge and understanding of local communities through some of its members from the school community.

Key themes for questions:
Their sense of their own identity/ies –
•what is important about them?
•How does their identity express itself?
•Do aspects of their identity conflict with one another?
•What do they want you to understand about their identity/ies?
•Plus additional questions on this theme

Their sense of their community –
•What is their community/ies?
•What makes their community different from others?
•What is it like t be a member of that community/ies
•Are there similarities between their communities?
•Are their differences?
•What do they want you to know about their community/ies?

The school –
•What do they value about the school as a community?
•What would they change about the school in relation to its community/ies?
•What would they like teachers and pupils to know /understand about them and their communities
•What do they think we should do/where should we go if we want to improve our understanding of them and their communities?